

A Metropolitan Line. Robert LaPalme (1908-1997),  
Caricature and Power in the Age of Duplessis (1936-1959)

Dominic Llywelyn Hardy

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## ABSTRACT

A Metropolitan Line. Robert LaPalme (1908-1997), Caricature and Power in the Age of Duplessis (1936-1959)

Dominic Llywelyn Hardy  
Concordia University, 2006

This dissertation proposes that the caricatures of Robert LaPalme, from his virtuoso celebrity portraits of the 1930s to the graphic political satires that focused on Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis in the 1950s, provided a body of work that fulfilled the conditions of a “golden age of caricature,” as it is characteristically defined in the historiography of caricature studies in European and North American traditions, for the history of visual arts in Quebec. These “national” models are seen as fundamentally metropolitan productions that represent themselves as national in scope by addressing and trading in the identity markings which provide the material for ideological conflicts within national traditions.

Robert LaPalme’s imagery was developed in concert with a generation of leaders who laid the groundwork for the Quiet Revolution, the secularisation and modernisation of Quebec society, through a dynamic and contesting relationship with the Duplessis administrations of 1936-40 and 1944-59. LaPalme’s caricature harnessed urban anxieties and licence, both depending on and mocking them: it represented the breaches between competing images of Quebec that were rehearsed throughout the culture, from the rural/urban ideological split to the swiftly reconfigured ground of sexual behaviour and freedoms. Caricature in LaPalme’s hands was the expression of the troubled, corrupt, powerful and exciting city of Montreal as a centre where the future for Quebec was imagined around the wily and traitorous figure of Maurice Duplessis. The thesis examines through a broadly chronological framework



LaPalme's treatment of subjects, his visual style, through his approach to the body and space, and his close collaboration with many of the leading artists editors, journalists, publishers and writers of his era.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by paying tribute to my first art history teacher, Madame Boissay at the Académie Michèle Provost in Montréal. This study is in great part the culmination of a journey she opened thirty-five years ago. Books on Rowlandson, Daumier, Doré, Searle, annuals by Giles and Aislin, André Franquin, Hergé, Albert Uderzo, Charles Schulz came from my parents : Robin Hardy, a filmmaker who has always drawn beautifully, the late Elizabeth Richards, a grammarian and political historian *née* whose gift of Terry Mosher's and Peter Desbarats's *The Hecklers* has been a constant, well-thumbed companion.

The story of Robert LaPalme exemplifies the political ideals that I understood first through my mother's valiant Welsh liberal socialism and through the values of my mentor, the late Dale C. Thomson. Having since followed a path through literature, art, art history and Canadian studies, I pay tribute here to teachers: Michel Tolosa, John Fox, Reesa Greenberg, Ellen James, Jean Bélisle, Laurier Lacroix, Catherine Mackenzie and John Wadland.

All of the research and writing presented here were carried out independently while working full-time at the Education and Public Programmes Department of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts since 1999. I wish to signal my sincere appreciation to department head Hélène Nadeau. At Concordia University since 2000, Brian Foss has patiently supervised each of the stages of the thesis, from its shaping in coursework to proposal and then through each of the chapters. The challenges he set and the standards he required have truly enriched the journey of writing. I would like to thank Maître Jean-Pierre Pilon, executor of Robert LaPalme's estate and trustee of the Fondation Robert LaPalme, for providing access to its archives and for granting permission to reproduce all of the images by Robert LaPalme that appear in this study. Thanks are also due to Maître Pilon, to Terry Mosher and to Jean-François Nadeau for enlightening conversations about the LaPalme they knew.

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To Lori, and to our daughters Caitlin and Iris, this study is dedicated with abiding love. I thank you for your patient witnessing of this thesis as it grew, and grew, and grew, and I hope that it will give you another way to the roots we have, as a family, in Québec.

Montréal, September 13, 2006

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Berthio (Roland Berthiaume), “Drôle de semaine” [set of four drawings, the top drawing showing Maurice Duplessis using Jean-Marie Savignac as a pea-shooter]. *Vrai*, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1958: p. 7.

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Berthio (Roland Berthiaume). “Drôle de semaine” [lowermost drawing, “Les hauts faits du 1<sup>er</sup> minus. Le 6 mars- Duplessis fait dans ses culottes”]. *Vrai*, March 15<sup>th</sup> 1958: p. 7.

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Unpublished caricature printed from 1948, reprinted in LaPalme (1950) : n.p.

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La boîte à mythes. *Le Devoir*, April 29th 1952 : 4

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Henri Julien, Un vieux de « 37 ». (c.1900-1908). Reprinted in *Album Julien* (Montréal, Beauchemin, 1916) : 184.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

This is a study of a closely knit alliance between a vast body of satirical drawings, selected from an output spanning three key decades of twentieth-century Québec, and the many layers of historical resonance that they inform and that inform them in turn. Our contention is that these drawings, made by Robert LaPalme (1908-1997) and published in Montréal and Québec City newspapers between 1933 and 1959, embody the era of Maurice le Noblet Duplessis (1890-1959) in Québec politics in ways that constitute an age of caricature, much as late Georgian and July Monarchy caricature practices are recognized in the art history traditions of Britain and France, respectively. Dominating figures of power are allied to (and ridiculed by) outstanding visual artists through satirical odysseys that come to describe, in their nations' historical memory, determining cultural and political movements that coalesce around conflicts over representation. Our study will argue that this model can now be recognized for Québec, and will describe it across the arc of its inception, development and conclusion, before proposing uses of the model for the field of research – Québec caricature studies – thereby constituted.

Close cross-readings between image and text, as well as visual, literary, polemical, political and religious subtexts will necessarily be called on to sustain our study. In this opening chapter, the reader will be offered three background sections that are intended to assist in reading the chapters that follow.

In the first, we provide a biographical summary of the life of Robert LaPalme against which an outline history of the caricature tradition in Québec can take its most useful meaning. Our outline of his career focuses primarily on the decades associated with the Duplessis drawings, offering a checklist of the commissioning patrons, editors, publishers and contexts of LaPalme's publication. Essential checkpoints in the evolving historical framework of caricature in Québec – the chief practitioners between 1760 and 1920, the main changes in the material history of caricature production, and key political-historical developments – are then enumerated.

In the second section, we summarize the research structure that the reader will encounter as the study unfolds. We pose at the same time problems in caricature studies for Québec that it should be possible to investigate as a result of this research. We will return to these problems in the conclusion of our thesis.

In the third section, we provide an account of the sources and methodologies on which our research is based. Having established both practitioner and practice and the relevant traditions that define them, we turn to a wider viewpoint in which we consider methodological models in Québec art history, caricature studies, and political history, and models that have been developed outside Québec, particularly in British and French visual studies.

## **1. Towards ‘A Metropolitan Line’: The Place of Robert LaPalme in Caricature Traditions**

A metropolitan line: drawn with flair and fluidity, capturing likeness brilliantly and breaking its rules with knowing wit, making its city emblematic of all that was modern and charmingly abrasive in the Jazz Age, the age of streamlining and Cubism, of art deco and cinema, of abstraction and advertising. This was caricature in the hands of Robert LaPalme (1908-1997). In Montréal – in New York, Ottawa and Québec City too, but especially in Montréal – LaPalme joyfully cross-plundered the vocabularies of visual modernism that could be found throughout the realm of mass media periodicals and daily newspaper journalism in the era of radio broadcasting, movies and celebrity. He did so in the service of his ability to portray likeness as a virtuoso turn, assembling resemblance to physiognomy and connotation of individual character and psychology – in short, identity – out of often tiny repertoires of the sparest possible geometric elements. This ability was at the heart of a power LaPalme deployed throughout his career. The viewer/reader’s astonishment and delight charge the meanings that are then assembled around the perception of this feat. LaPalme gradually added the purposes of graphic political satire and pamphleteering ideological invective to his arsenal. His style evolved and changed significantly, but it never abandoned this central and powerful connotative capacity (Figure 1-1 a-f).

Although Robert LaPalme was born in Montréal in 1908, his family lived in rural Alberta from 1918 to 1925. In these years, LaPalme was educated in English and nourished on a



diet of illustrated readings, chiefly newspapers and French comic books sent by relatives back east. The ambition to be an artist was formed in childhood and greatly encouraged by his mother. In 1926 LaPalme attempted to enrol in the École des beaux-arts de Montréal (EBAM) but failed the entrance exam; he nonetheless was part of the milieu of EBAM students of this era.<sup>1</sup> Between 1926 and 1932, he worked at a variety of jobs in Montréal: sculptor's assistant, movie theatre usher, and salesman in the art gallery of the T. Eaton Company. Like many of his friends, he joined the Association catholique de la jeunesse canadienne-française, the ACJC.<sup>2</sup> In 1932, his first illustrations were published by Éditions Albert Lévesque, and he launched a short-lived homemade magazine called *Zut!*, with the financial assistance of leading Québec public figures such as the economist Edouard Montpetit, provincial under-secretary Athanase David and Montréal mayor Camillien Houde.<sup>3</sup>

LaPalme's illustrations for the 1933 edition of Albert Lévesque's *Almanach de la langue française* (published at the end of 1932) brought him to the attention of critics in Montréal, Québec City and Ottawa. His first newspaper cartoons and caricatures, chiefly of municipal and provincial notables, were published in *La Patrie* in the fall of 1933. Among these was his first caricature of the newly-elected leader of the provincial Conservative party, Maurice Duplessis (Figure 1-2). Within a year of the publication of his illustrations for Albert Lévesque, his work was recognized for its leadership and

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<sup>1</sup> LaPalme. *La caricature et autres sujets sérieux. Entretiens avec Jean-François Nadeau* (Montréal, l'Hexagone, 1997): 34.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.: 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Zut!* had promised subscribers twelve issues; two were actually published, the second being a joint edition of issues 2 through 12. Ibid.: 39.

innovation, redolent as it was of the avant-garde vocabularies chiefly associated with European fine art (especially that of France). He attracted a considerable critical response that used his caricature to come to terms with avant-garde concepts that were otherwise largely resisted by the critical milieu for application to Québec fine arts. LaPalme's style at this time alternated between curvilinear gag cartoons and portrait heads, and the first of his geometric-abstracting virtuoso portraits. By the end of 1933, his caricatures were appearing in the pages of *Le Canada*, having come to the attention of Olivar Asselin, the paper's editor since 1930. Asselin left *Le Canada* in early 1934 and founded the weekly *L'Ordre*, where LaPalme became a constant front-page presence. LaPalme also continued to provide illustrations for the Lévesque *Almanach* until 1935. In this year, newly married, LaPalme left for New York for two years. There he became aware of the work of the Federal Arts Project of the government-sponsored Works Progress Administration (1935-39) in promoting large-scale mural art and in helping to circulate and promote the mural work of Mexican artists; several of these artists and many of their ideas were key influences on the progressive art milieu of Montréal in the second half of the 1930s. In New York LaPalme was a freelance artist, sending work back to Montréal and Asselin's very short-lived *La Renaissance*, and contributing to a number of periodicals in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago.

By far the largest component of LaPalme's career as a caricaturist and graphic satirist is tied to his newspaper affiliations. These will be enumerated very briefly here, but will be examined in detail in the chapters that follow. On returning to Canada in 1937, LaPalme undertook a brief stint at Ottawa's *Le Droit* before moving to Québec City, where he was

caricaturist alongside journalist and editor Jean-Louis Gagnon at *Le Journal* (1937-38) and at *L'Événement-Journal* (1939). He then became a daily caricaturist at *L'Action catholique* (1940-43). He returned to Montréal, becoming daily caricaturist at *Le Canada* (1943-51), where he launched his anti-Duplessis output. At the end of the Second World War his caricatures also appeared occasionally in *Le Jour* (1945) and *Combat* (1946). LaPalme's heyday as a graphic satirist is linked to *Le Devoir* (1951-59) under Gérard Filion and André Laurendeau. His career as a daily caricaturist concluded at Jean-Louis Gagnon's *La Presse* (1959-61) and *Le Nouveau Journal* (1961-62). From 1954 through 1959 LaPalme also contributed caricatures to Jacques Hébert's weekly political journal, *Vrai*.

After four years as a freelance caricaturist (1960-64), notably for *Le magazine Maclean*, LaPalme emerged in the municipal universe of Jean Drapeau, as art director for the first series of *métro* stations inaugurated in 1966 and as curator for the Pavilion of Humour at *Man and His World*, Montréal's 1967 international exhibition (*Expo 67*). In 1963, he had launched the annual Salon of caricature, which was reborn in 1968 at the *Man and his World* site as the *International Salon of Caricature*. Until 1988, LaPalme was the salon's director and curator, traveling throughout the world and bringing leading international caricature to Montréal.

Robert LaPalme's career was also marked by exhibitions both as artist and curator. Throughout the 1930s he participated in group and solo exhibitions at public, non-museum sites in Montréal and Québec City. In 1941-43, he was the founding director of

the Galerie municipale de Québec. He was included in the National Gallery of Canada's exhibition *War Cartoons and Caricatures of the British Commonwealth*, circulated in 1941-45, and his work traveled under the National Gallery's auspices to Brazil, Italy and France in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He exhibited sporadically in commercial galleries from the 1950s to the 1990s, with retrospectives at the Musée Marc-Aurèle Fortin in 1984 and, as part of a two-person show with Vancouver cartoonist Len Norris, at the Canadian Museum of Caricature in Ottawa in 1990.<sup>4</sup>

Robert LaPalme was active throughout his life as a painter as well, with ambitions as a muralist which grew out of the public dimensions of his caricature, under the impetus of the Mexican muralists who were influential in the 1930s, in both English and French progressive artistic circles and especially among artists grouped around Jean Paul Lemieux at the École des beaux-arts de Québec in the late 1930s and early 1940s.<sup>5</sup> Early murals for the Canadian Army in 1942 were followed by a satiric, temporary, mural-scale work on Canadian history for Gratien Gélinas in 1945, and other mural projects installed chiefly in the Montréal area in the 1950s and 1960s.

There are few of LaPalme's works in public collections, for he kept the majority of his original drawings as part of an archive which he hoped would be the basis of a museum collection, and set up a foundation to safeguard and promote his work after his death. He

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<sup>4</sup> This museum, a division of the then National Archives of Canada, was in operation from 1989 to 1994 only.

<sup>5</sup> "L'Art et la caricature". *Le Journal* (Québec), February 4<sup>th</sup> 1938. In this unsigned report of a talk he had given the preceding evening, Robert LaPalme cites the new masters of caricature: the Mexicans Diego Rivera and Miguel Covarrubias. Posters by these artists were shown in Montréal in 1943 ("Notes from Montréal", *Canadian Art*, vol 1 : 3: 120).

ceased all artistic activities in 1995. Between 1994 and 1997, he met on a regular basis with historian Jean-François Nadeau for the series of interviews in which he reviewed his life and work.<sup>6</sup> Robert LaPalme died on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1997.

LaPalme's febrile visual sensitivity may in itself account for a "force sociopolitique" that was discerned by Jean-François Nadeau.

Le caricaturiste, dans l'histoire, se trouve souvent près du peuple, car son art en est un de gavroche. Le maître de la caricature porte en lui une force sociopolitique extraordinaire dont il est malheureusement impossible de prendre toute la mesure faute de pouvoir compter sur des études aussi complètes qu'en souhaitait Baudelaire, dès 1855, dans les pages du *Portefeuille*. Parmi les premiers, l'auteur des *Fleurs du mal* avait vu avec raison tout ce que pourrait nous enseigner une étude où seraient étroitement tissés les liens entre vie sociale et caricature. L'idée viendra peut-être un jour à un historien de pénétrer l'époque du duplessisme par l'analyse des caricatures de LaPalme. Ce serait un travail considérable, mais combien riche, qui mènerait sans doute à conclure, avec Guy Robert, que le caricaturiste fut, en quelque sorte, un des artisans de la Révolution tranquille.<sup>7</sup>

This challenge bears directly on the constitution of caricature studies as a subject within Quebec art history.<sup>8</sup> By fusing LaPalme's achievement to *duplessisme*, Nadeau identifies the sustained influence of Duplessis throughout the Québec body politic in his time. LaPalme constructed an emblematic, comic Québec governed by a wily ruler who governed through a shrewd manipulation of the mythic dimensions of his people's view of themselves and their nation. *Duplessisme* and the "caricatures de LaPalme" effectively illuminate one another. LaPalme also shrewdly articulated his virtuoso drawings with

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<sup>6</sup> Jean-François Nadeau, "Présentation", in LaPalme (1997): 20.

<sup>7</sup> LaPalme (1997) : 16.

<sup>8</sup> The area studies definition adopted for this study indicates no *parti pris* against Canadian Studies as an interdisciplinary framework. The study emerges from earlier work with a joint Canadian Studies/Canadian art history background. The wider framework of a Canadian identity and conditioning can be taken as given here, notably with respect to absence of caricature studies in Canadian art historical traditions.

intensely layered humorous texts and targeted the wider ideological imperatives that were Duplessis's instruments of power between 1936 and 1959.<sup>9</sup>

Like Guy Robert, the contemporary art critic and founding director of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Nadeau sees the practice of caricature as a visual art that has central political and social importance, both in order to understand this era for itself and for the transformations that caricature is effectively held to have helped engender.<sup>10</sup> But in this, both Nadeau and Robert claim a position for caricature that has not fallen within the central preoccupations of Québec art history, despite the fact that the era under discussion has been firmly established as centrally important to the development of visual arts in Québec. The accession of the visual arts to modernity has been counted as one of the principal indicators of societal change that triggered the Quiet Revolution that followed Duplessis's death in 1959. The absence of caricature from this record seems all the more remarkable given Nadeau's justified reference to Charles Baudelaire (1821-1967), for the French poet and critic's role was foundational for the conception of the artist engaged with modernity, and emblematic of a resulting autonomy and status that could be accessed only with great difficulty in late nineteenth-century Québec society. Baudelaire is also a key modern theorist of caricature.<sup>11</sup> The absence of caricature from

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<sup>9</sup> At the time of writing, Nadeau is director of the cultural pages of *Le Devoir*. I extend thanks to him for an interview in September 2003 in which he illuminated many aspects of the LaPalme interviews.

<sup>10</sup> In Chapter Five, we will have occasion to examine in some detail the role of the late Guy Robert (1933-2000) as a literary critic, primarily in the 1950s, at the time of his early cultural journalism for clerical and secular publications, before the foundation of the Musée d'art contemporain in 1964. M. Robert should doubtless be considered as much an artisan as LaPalme.

<sup>11</sup> Baudelaire's principal texts on caricature are to be found in "Quelques caricaturistes français" (*Oeuvres complètes II* (Paris, Gallimard, 1976): 544-563, and "Quelques caricaturistes étrangers" (*Ibid.*): 564-574.

the studies of the Quiet Revolution has to varying degrees conditioned the critical reception of caricature in the history of art and of intellectual life in Québec, and it is of a piece with the methodological uncertainties that Québec art history has faced in dealing with its own accession to modernity.<sup>12</sup> The ghosts of Baudelaire and the French intellectual tradition that he exemplified, however, were never distant from the motivations and surfaces of the projects of modernity that marked LaPalme's Québec.

The practice of caricature, the *portrait chargé* or loaded portrait, was also a charged inheritance that went to the heart of Québec's *identitaire* traditions – a factor that may well account for caricature's ambivalent status in the apparatus of Québec art history. Caricature plays on the viewer's cultural expectations for its framework of resemblance, and then subverts them through shades of an irony that ranges from the tame to the ferocious, all while treading gingerly or with trampling effect on the codes of polite representation. And since the sixteenth century and the mannerist and Counter-Reformation cultures of virtuoso artistic accomplishment, caricature has also traded in common identities that connote group, class, gender and national belongings.<sup>13</sup>

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Also essential is the text "De l'essence du rire et généralement du comique dans les arts plastiques" (*Ibid.*): 525-543. Baudelaire's theory of caricature has been read across his poetry and art criticism in two key recent studies: Ainslie Armstrong McLees, *Baudelaire's «Argot Plastique». Poetic Caricature and Modernism* (Athens and London, University of Georgia Press, 1989), and Michèle Hanoosh, *Baudelaire and Caricature: from the Comic to an Art of Modernity* (State College: Penn State Press, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> See "The posthumous fate of Henri Julien and his 1899 Political Cartoons", in Dominic Hardy, "Drawn to Order: Henri Julien's Political Cartoons of 1899 and His Career with Hugh Graham's Montréal Daily Star, 1888-1908" (unpublished MA thesis, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, 1998): 148-176.

<sup>13</sup> One of the most evocative accounts of these origins, given its description between individual virtuosity, theatre practices, unregulated public drawings and those of children in the years around 1600, will be found in Irvin Lavin, "High and Low before Their Time: Bernini and the Art of Social Satire," in Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, eds., *Modern Art and Popular Culture: Readings in High and Low*, 12-50 (New York: Harry N. Abrams and the Museum of Modern Art, 1990). Yet if anything, caricature, in our day or that of any generation, fulfills at the very least the most traditional of iconographic methodology models. Given

Caricatures were part of the economy of images and of representations circulated to mark the limits of power – limits both personal and state-based. The conflation of person, nation, and state was as present in James Gillray's images of George III, the Prince Regent or Napoleon, as it was in Charles Philipon's and Honoré Daumier's images of King Louis-Philippe as a pear, or indeed in Robert LaPalme's drawings of Maurice Duplessis. LaPalme's Duplessis, like Gillray's Boney or Philipon's and Daumier's Pear-King, functions as a comic creation that stands in carnivalesque opposition to a ruler whose legitimacy is thereby undermined. Its purpose must therefore also be to supplant the ruler – to take the ruler's place in public memory, or at the very least to rival it in the name of other dimensions that must be circulated, usually in opposition to the ruler's own highly controlled self-representation through the cultural imageries of the state. But this undermining depends on the marshalling of forces that are also redolent of the state, or at least of its society.

As we will see, this tradition of satirical caricature, or graphic satire, flourishes because it can circulate in ways that are both regulated and unregulated. It both adopts and is consumed through the economy of the circulation of images. Québec, as a polity created through the history of conflicts between long-seated and opposing European powers, themselves representative of opposing national identities, represents the problematic of

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that this practice, originating in Early Modern Europe, continues to function in the twentieth century along complex registers that can be teased out of close readings of incidental visual and textual artefacts and often complex relationships between commissioning patrons, producing artists and hybrid audiences, it offers an iconographic/iconological nexus just as useful for the decoding of sixteenth or twentieth century visual culture. Caricature and graphic satire represent the survival of rich traditions of withholding, encoding, circulating and releasing meaning. They also signal the surviving conception of the artist as a virtuoso, ingenious (as opposed to *of Genius*) inventor of imagery. The mid-twentieth century caricaturist can seem difficult to recuperate into histories of art, although it may now be possible to use or integrate models in visual studies, in history of design or propaganda.



representation. In Europe, especially in Britain and France of the years 1770-1820, the limits of representation were constantly being reconfigured around the subversion, destruction and desecration of the represented figure, often in measure of his or her status in society. Yet the successively colonial, late Georgian and Victorian character of fledgling Québec society under British domination, with a technological infrastructure that only gradually permitted the constitution of a polemical satirical print culture, appears to have accounted for a delay in the development of such modes of satirical and attacking discourses. Very few traces of early graphic satire have survived from colonial post-Conquest Québec. A satirical electioneering broadside such as *À tous les électeurs...*, printed at Québec City about 1792, is mostly emblematic in character, though charged with a frank humour. It bears limited representational sophistication but attests to some expertise in printed image design (Figure 1-3). In the 1790s and 1800s we find records and some instances of caricature in the work of émigré French portrait painter and sometime caricaturist Louis Dulongpré (1759-1853), notably in a series of demonic satirical portraits executed around 1811 (Figure 1-4).<sup>14</sup> These traces are more frequently visible from the 1840s, through exponents such as John Henry Walker at Montréal and Jean-Baptiste Côté at Quebec City.<sup>15</sup> Walker and Côté sustain a vibrant and trenchant political satire. Walker uses the visual graphic codes of reproductive prints that were familiar to readers of the *London Illustrated News*, or *Punch* magazine. Côté's work exemplifies the harsh woodcut image that is as old as pre-Gutenberg printmaking

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Dérome, Paul Bourassa and Joanne Chagnon, *Dulongpré: de plus près* (Montréal, McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> For these artists and this period, see Yves Chèvrefils, "John Henry Walker (1831-1899), Artisan-Graveur", in *Journal of Canadian Art History*, vol X no 2 (Winter 1985): 178-223; Allard (1996), op. cit.; Dominic Hardy, "The Illustrated Satiric Press", in Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Fleming, and Fiona A. Black, eds., *History of the book in Canada 1840-1914*. Vol II (Toronto and Montréal : University of Toronto Press/Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2005): 310-314

in Europe (Figure 1-5 a-b).<sup>16</sup> Walker, supportive of the English elites at Montréal, and Côté, resolutely *canadien* and opposed to Confederation, operate as both the producers and the merchants of their imagery, in varying degrees of cooperation with political instances. The populations of Montréal and Québec City were too small to provide a sufficient market for their work, and in this their fate was no different from that of most Canadian artists of their era. For the graphic artists, no less than for their journalist, editor and publisher colleagues, the support of and dependence on party-political affiliation and financing would prove a bedevilling necessity in the development of the “autonomous” authorial position, the latter long posited as a critical standard for modernity. This was a problem, as we shall see, not necessarily resolved in Robert LaPalme’s career.

These issues are fully present in the career of Henri Julien (1852-1908), not least because he was at crucial junctures the employee of a publishing firm that provided a regular showcase for his work. Julien’s work as a caricaturist followed on from training first as a reproductive engraver and then as an illustrator at George-Edouard Desbarats’s and William Leggo’s *Canadian Illustrated News* and *L’Opinion Publique* (1869-83 and 1870-83, respectively).<sup>17</sup> Julien’s style was forged in consistent imitation of the codes of painting that had marked reproductive engraving since its inception in the late fifteenth

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<sup>16</sup> Linda C. Hults gives a clear sense of the role of satire and polemics in the history of western printmaking traditions, tracing their inception to that of printmaking in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries in Northern Europe and in Italy with a flourishing of satiric emblematic imagery alongside the launch of the Reformation. See the chapters “Early relief and intaglio techniques” and “Dürer and Northern Artists” in *The Print in the Western World. An Introductory History* (Madison [Wisconsin], The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996): 19-135.

<sup>17</sup> We have discussed the careers of George-Edouard Desbarats and William Leggo and their infrastructural impact on the development of caricature in Canada in “A Cartoonist’s Progress: The Career of Henri Julien” in Hardy (1988): 29-62, especially 43-48. Both Desbarats and Leggo are the subjects of entries in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1966- ) available online at [www.biographi.ca](http://www.biographi.ca).

century. But there was a distinctive twist attendant on the very small market of a Canadian society attempting to give itself the same information and leisure institutions as its metropolitan model. The economics of European mass circulation of printed images in periodicals had given rise to armies of reproductive engravers whose labour-intensive work enabled the steady supply and consumption of printed images in news and opinion journals of the nineteenth century. Montréal's small market size and skill shortage at the time of Confederation could not support such manpower requirements in the manufacture and circulation of images. But Desbarats's and Leggo's development of early photomechanical reproduction technology, which led directly to the establishment of daily photo-reproduction journalism in New York City in the 1880s, was tested out first at the *Canadian Illustrated News* and at *L'Opinion Publique*. While the reproduction of half-tone photographs was still prohibitive, their innovations, part of the international circulation of technological research, allowed for the easy reproduction of high-contrast black and white images.

Julien's training was thus *simulation* of codes of engraving, in images which were hand-drawn and photographed before transmission to metal plates for printing. This practice, soon a widespread standard, yielded in turn to the reproduction of the *autographic* illustration, that is, one which depended on aesthetic components more apparently indexical of the swift, hand-drawn image, whether in brush, pen and ink, pencil or charcoal. Julien's 1899 image of Wilfrid Laurier as a cowardly military man (Figure 1-6a) is a world away from his 1877 image of Laurier raising the Liberal standard (Figure 1-6b). It belongs to a family that includes images by the American Thomas Nast or the

Canadian John Wilson Bengough (Figure 1-7a-b). Julien's 1899 drawing bears traces of an artistic personality in a way that had originally been facilitated by lithography, and that was exemplified by the influential images of France's Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) (Figure 1-7c), images that were printed separately from and inserted into the journals in which they appeared. Photolithography made possible the mass circulation and direct integration of images into newspapers.

At Hugh Graham's *Montreal Daily Star*, Julien assumed a position of aesthetic leadership, especially through his pen, brush and ink political portraits of the 1890s and through his satirical drawings of Wilfrid Laurier's cabinet in the 1899 series *The Songs of the By-Town Coons*: a depiction of Laurier and his cabinet in blackface makeup, singing ersatz minstrel songs that satirized Liberal policies (Figure 5-24). We have argued that Julien, directed by a Conservative newspaper to satirize the first French-Canadian prime minister of Canada, articulated a resistance to this commission through his choice of codes of representation.<sup>18</sup> On adopting codes of denigration associated with blackness in dominant Western culture, he retained codes of decorum in physiognomic representation that effectively argued a winking alliance rather than wholehearted satirical opprobrium. Effectively the first regularly salaried illustrator/caricaturist in Montréal, and as such beholden for his livelihood to Conservative interests, his conflicted personal position led him to resign as caricaturist at the *Montreal Daily Star*. His successor, Arthur George Racey (1870-1941), already a veteran of small independent satirical weeklies and of Joseph-Israel Tarte's *La Patrie*, took over and gleefully employed the vocabularies of

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<sup>18</sup> See "Henri Julien's 1899 Cartoons", in Hardy (1998): 100-147.

visual denigration, corporeal deformity and ethnic stereotyping that Julien resisted (Figure 5-25). The problem of the caricaturist's own ideological and artistic position was thus at stake.

The mass-reproduction of autographic drawing also led to the rise of the comic strip. In late 1890s and early 1900s Montréal, Racey, Raoul Barré (1874-1932) and Albéric Bourgeois (1876-1962) launched careers around the same satirical journals and broadsheet newspapers – the *Montréal Daily Star*, *La Patrie*, *La Presse* – that were operating according to standards shared with other major North American newspapers.<sup>19</sup> Barré and Bourgeois worked in New York and Boston, respectively, in the years following 1900, and developed the first consistently published francophone comic strips to use speech balloons. Bourgeois's career at *La Presse* was launched in 1905. His mentor Henri Julien warned him to stay away from political caricature if he could help it because it was “une sale affaire”.<sup>20</sup> Bourgeois did in fact caricature, at will, the widest possible range of local, regional, national and international personalities, constituting the first truly international *imagier* of caricature to provide a distinct French-Canadian satirical viewpoint on the world at large. Racey filled the same function at the *Star*. A selection of Bourgeois's caricatures leaves the reader with the impression that enough

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<sup>19</sup> Raoul Barré (1874-1932), caricaturist and comic strip artist in both Montréal and Boston, was one of the pioneers of early animated cinema. He was the subject of a 1976 monograph by André Martin, *Barré l'introuvable* (Montréal: Cinémathèque québécoise, 1976), and of a retrospective exhibition organized by Marco de Blois at the Cinémathèque québécoise in 2004, *À la découverte de Raoul Barré. Créateur d'un siècle nouveau* (April 15<sup>th</sup>-October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2004). For Albéric Bourgeois, see Léon-A. Robidoux, *Albéric Bourgeois, caricaturiste* (Montréal, VLB Éditeur et Médiabec, 1978). No monograph devoted to Arthur G. Racey has yet been traced; hundreds of his original drawings are in the archives of Trent University, Peterborough.

<sup>20</sup> Albéric Bourgeois, “En roulant ma boule.” *La Presse*, November 19th 1927 : 25.

elements of resemblance to successfully connote the proposed satirized figure have been assembled to succeed – but that all the figures also fundamentally resemble one another (Figure 2-2). Bourgeois's outstanding and longest-lasting creations were the figures of Baptiste Ladébauche and his wife Catherine, whom he deployed week after week over half a century to articulate a view of the follies and immense changes of modernity from the position of stereotypical Québec *habitants*. Baptiste and Catherine's long-running presence was the direct antecedent to the position occupied by the more malefic Maurice Duplessis in LaPalme's cartoons, and LaPalme's Duplessis came to represent no less of a stereotype (at once reviled and useful), both inside and outside francophone Québec.

Julien died suddenly in 1908, the year of LaPalme's birth. Bourgeois, Barré and Racey belonged to a new generation of draftsmen. They produced rubbery comic figures that were redolent of comic strips and early animation. LaPalme, although clearly their successor, appeared in his earliest drawings to have been educated in a different visual world: the droll experiments of England's Max Beerbohm, drifting through the London and country-estate literary and artistic coterie; the reconfiguring languages of Cubism in Paris ateliers; and the sophisticated visual humour of New York theatre- and cinema-based caricature in American illustrated magazines – the works of Manuel de Zayas, Paolo Garretto and Miguel Covarrubias.

LaPalme was a thus child of twentieth-century media no less than Julien was of nineteenth-century visual information technology. But in his era the preoccupations with the codes of reproduction, now mastered and joyfully recombined, had given way to the

collapsing into one another of all regimes of representation – historical and contemporary fine arts, photography, advertising, commercial design – as a way of circulating and trading on the relentless and unrestricted deployment of likeness and of individual and group (social or national) connotations of that likeness. It was the other face of the cult of celebrity, effectively an economic resource for the mass communications industry, as the links between publishing and cinema soon showed. This was the context for the transformation of political and ideological representation that also exploited the vast networks of popular access to images in the era of radio, and later television broadcasting. LaPalme's was a caricature born in this first era of radio diffusion, a phenomenon harnessed with great influence by politicians such as U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Québec Premier Maurice Duplessis. This régime of celebrity representation became the visual language par excellence for the representation of elites, and virtuoso celebrity caricature became a marker of participation in such elites. In the early 1930s, Robert LaPalme thus arrived in a metropolitan milieu, Montréal, where a cross-national network of the circulation of elite images prevailed. Once LaPalme's career was underway in 1932-33, his ability to represent local, national and international figures in the same representational system, according to the most advanced visual languages available, allowed him to appear to his own community as a leader within the international repertoire of caricature practitioners.

Maurice Duplessis was elected in 1936 to a first term as premier of Québec. He lost power in a snap election in 1939. His next election victory, in 1944, ushered in fifteen unbroken years in power and four straight election victories, the *Chef* being vanquished

only by death in September 1959. Robert LaPalme returned to Canada in order to deploy his special brand of caricature to Québec personalities and politics in late winter 1937. He settled briefly in Ottawa to work for *Le Droit*, a Catholic newspaper. As we have seen, by June 1937 he was in Québec City, where he worked until October 1939 with Jean-Louis Gagnon (fresh from a stint at the separatist-fascist *La Nation*), at *Le Journal* and its successor, *L'Événement-Journal*, in a climate of patronage controlled by Duplessis and his Union nationale party. After Duplessis's defeat in a snap election in October 1939, LaPalme joined Eugène L'Heureux's *L'Action catholique*. Like *Le Droit*, this newspaper had been created in the wake of *Rerum novarum*, the 1891 Papal encyclical favouring the Catholic Church's social engagement. *L'Action catholique* had been sympathetic to the first Duplessis administration, above all for the latter's overt appeal for Church support, and for its legislation (the notorious Padlock Law) that outlawed the free association of members of the Canadian Communist Party. In 1939-40, *L'Action catholique* was concerned to align itself with the new Liberal government of Adélard Godbout and with the Liberal government of Mackenzie King in Ottawa. In 1937-39 LaPalme had also worked as the librarian of the École des beaux-arts de Québec (EBAQ) alongside Jean Paul Lemieux, who was at the time a key contributor to progressive art criticism in Québec via the pages of Montréal's *Le Jour*, edited by Jean-Charles Harvey. LaPalme was also employed after 1940 as an instructor at Université Laval. These shifts of appointments and positions attest to the volatile climate of opinion in Québec, very divided in its attitude towards the oncoming war in Europe. These divisions marked the work of leading caricaturists in Québec: while Racey at the *Star*, Bourgeois at *La Presse* and Harry Mayerovitch (Mayo) and John Collins at (Liberal-financed) *Le Jour* supported



the Allied position, LaPalme's drawings for the pro-Duplessis *L'Événement-Journal* during the October 1939 election campaign were signed "Adolf", drawing a strange, ironic link between Hitler and Duplessis that LaPalme would turn inside out within a few years.

Like many former ACJC members, LaPalme's early affiliations had brought him into the turbulent nationalist politics which, from left to right on the political spectrum, challenged the status quo of nearly forty years' worth of Liberal Party government at Québec City, with its attendant compact with the bourgeois order of Québec society. This stance also defined itself in opposition to Anglo-Canadian identification with the British Empire and Commonwealth. The Second World War challenged this stance in turn. Québec public opinion was polarized by calls for non-participation in the war against Hitler and Mussolini on the grounds that it only served to bolster British imperialism. LaPalme's career choices brought him into contact with the factions of francophone Québec society which supported Canada's role in the war; *L'Action catholique* was tied to the position of Cardinal Jean-Marie Rodrigue Villeneuve, who in turn supported the federal government of Liberal Prime Minister Mackenzie King and his Québec lieutenant, Justice Minister Ernest Lapointe. As a result, LaPalme became closely linked to the federal Liberal infrastructure of the governments of King (1935-47) and of Louis Saint-Laurent (1947-57). While at *L'Action catholique*, LaPalme's graphic line, shifting gradually from its geometric-abstraction foundations of 1934-35, underwent a decisive shift towards a curvilinear, sensuous style that appeared more responsive to the

requirements of daily political gag cartooning. After 1945, this style attained a flamboyance that would remain characteristic until the mid-1950s.

LaPalme's 1943-51 work for *Le Canada*, the Montréal daily morning newspaper edited by Olivar Asselin's disciple Edmond Turcotte, and funded by the federal Liberal Party, coincided – in the closing stages of the war – with his being reunited with his erstwhile colleague Jean-Louis Gagnon, now a reforming Liberal. He also briefly contributed to Jean-Charles Harvey's *Le Jour* and to the Communist paper *Le Combat*. During the 1943-44 provincial election campaign, LaPalme attacked the Bloc populaire and its leader André Laurendeau, ideologue and historian Lionel Groulx, and *Le Devoir* and its founder, Henri Bourassa, as ridiculous or fascist opponents, because of their opposition to conscription in 1942. He also positioned then-opposition-leader Maurice Duplessis as an enemy through whom the war against the Axis powers would be fought on the home front. This he accomplished in a bucolic series of caricatures that deployed his skills through a newly inventive manipulation and transgression of codes of bodily representation and media information. These images launched the body of work that forms the basis of this study.

LaPalme first transformed Maurice Duplessis into an endlessly re-invented comic figure through eight years with *Le Canada*. Until the 1949 federal election which renewed Liberal rule at Ottawa under Louis Saint-Laurent, Duplessis and his political allies were repeatedly depicted as fascist opponents, although Duplessis was also given a wide range of roles that effectively placed in him on a par with Honoré Daumier's satirical

counterfoil creations, Robert Macaire and Ratapoil. (Figure 1-8 a-b). With the 1949 election out of the way, the *raison d'être* of the perennially loss-making *Le Canada*, last of the principal party-funded newspapers in Canada, dissolved as the Liberal Party reorganized its finances and largely recognized that party-controlled information media had limited legitimacy in a post-war democracy. The newspaper definitively closed in 1953.

In 1951, Robert LaPalme crossed over to *Le Devoir*, then enjoying a renaissance as a daily independent Catholic newspaper opposed to Maurice Duplessis and to thinking through Québec's (and Canada's) position in relation to the rapidly changing post-war international situation both at home (with the swift acceleration of industrial and social transformation) and abroad (with the dismantling of colonial empires and consequent armed conflicts, the Cold War and the threat of nuclear war). LaPalme thereby realigned himself with provincial politics and with an independent sympathy for the provincial Liberal party, then distancing itself from its federal counterpart under newly-elected leader Georges-Émile Lapalme (no relation). At *Le Devoir*, LaPalme's drawings were allied to the editorials of Gérard Filion and André Laurendeau, and to the investigative journalism of Gérard Pelletier and Pierre Laporte. As *Le Devoir* assumed leadership in the critique of Maurice Duplessis and his successive Union nationale administrations, LaPalme further developed his complex, carnivalesque, para-Duplessis, whose extensive comic dimensions served to articulate the anxieties and aspirations of an entire political class that, in 1950s Québec, was ready to take power. The Duplessis drawings of the 1950s at *Le Devoir* prolonged the comic manipulations inaugurated in wartime and fused

the identity of the Union nationale political régime and ideology with Duplessis's body, represented as aging and increasingly decrepit. Registers of violence, skin colour, uncertain gender roles, sexuality, corporeal decay and hierarchies of spoken language combined throughout this body of work.

## **2. Structure of the Thesis**

Following this chapter with its overview of his career and of provincial and journalistic politics, chapter two will present the initial phase of LaPalme's career as a celebrity portrait caricaturist (1933-35) and the critical and political basis for the acceptance of caricature in cultural discourse in Québec. What imperatives or ideologies authorized or legitimized it? Caricature was problematic, for it represented a left- and right-wing *contestataire* culture in Republican France, sometimes seen as irredeemably alien to the precepts of the more serene French Catholic nation in Laurentian lands imagined by Québec's nationalist leaders. Caricature's emergence as an elite practice and vehicle both celebrated and threatened these same nationalist leaders. The sense of paradox and contradiction is important in this chapter, for it also helps to argue how caricature articulates tacit values that must be deployed through the visual because they cannot be deployed through oral or written discourse. The French Catholic identity of LaPalme and his commissioning editors is seen as a case in point, as we consider Olivar Asselin, a prime supporter of the caricatural in visual and literary form. We also pay close attention to Asselin's admiration for the French apocalyptic writer Léon Bloy, whose mastery of the French language was directed at the symbolic destruction of the body and of the

limits of representation in society in order to lay the foundation for true Grace. This ultra-Catholic critique effectively contested the order and limits of representation and the representable. It is understood here as bearing and transmitting tacit values to LaPalme via Asselin, values that would have renewed meaning for LaPalme's caricature as he later focused on the aging and decaying body of Maurice Duplessis.

The third and fourth chapters are given over to the phenomenon of the deployment of caricature in wartime, and ascribe a decisive role to the administration and prosecution of the war by Canadian authorities, in the evolution and transformation of Robert LaPalme's style. The war effort is also seen as the direct source for the campaign against Maurice Duplessis that would last for as long as Duplessis held power. The Age of Duplessis begins twice, once with his 1936-39 government and then definitively with his resurgence in 1943, on the eve of the election that would return him to power for fifteen years. LaPalme is connected in these chapters to the pro-Free France forces operating in Canada during the Vichy régime. He is also linked with the Godbout and King governments and with colleagues who, participating in the war effort, were key contacts for LaPalme in the immediate post-war era. The war brought about another of Québec's deep identity crises in relation to its position on military participation, as in the Boer War and the Conscription Crisis of 1917. The crisis of 1942 was painfully divisive. The consequent polarisation in society forms the backdrop to the first sets of truly excessive graphic satires on LaPalme's part. These satires are measured through visual representation of bodily excess, but also through wilful pilfering across a wide range of

visual and textual (above all, informational) models in order to constitute ironically-referenced sources for humorous visual attack.

Chapter Five sees LaPalme in the world of André Laurendeau and Gérard Filion at *Le Devoir* (1951-59) and allies him to their leading critical role in the opposition to Maurice Duplessis. Indeed, LaPalme is seen as pushing the limits of satirical discourse to points well beyond those to which *Le Devoir* editorials were prepared to go. This is caricature in an atmosphere of political vigour that gives way to political despair, as the recourse to caricature in the name of democratic freedoms seems to founder on the inability of the democratic process to bring about desired change in political leadership. To the years following Duplessis's final election victory in 1956 belong the most excessive of all LaPalme's representations. But their capacity to supplant language no less than the leader of the state has limits as well, and we find LaPalme recognizing these limits when André Laurendeau begins reaching for emblems of visually configured identity markers, in the 1958 editorial "La théorie du roi nègre," whose force served to repatriate the power of visual invective to the realm of the written word.

In our final chapter, we will summarize our findings against the objectives set out here and also offer a set of re-readings of LaPalme's work in order to set up new cross-disciplinary bases of study. The drawings can be studied for attitudes to the body, to sexuality, to gender, to violence, decay, aging and death. Having concluded our overlapping chronologies with a description of a specifically Bloyen reading of some of LaPalme's final Duplessis images, we will then be able to map out the cross-readings and

propose a model for dealing with the overarching mythic structure that caricature helps to confer on the subject of power in Québec.

### 3. Sources and Methodologies

The sources that we have for LaPalme's life are few in type, as well as selective and important in ironic ways. In particular, the archive left behind at his death requires comprehensive accession and classification before it can be used. In this archive are some 1400 original drawings. At the time of completion of this study, the acquisition and conservation of this archive was under study by the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.

Caricature and graphic satire should belong to the history of modernist art in Québec, easily taking their cues from studies carried out by Jean-René Ostiguy, Charles C. Hill, and Esther Trépanier.<sup>21</sup> They also belong to the studies of Québec's modernity led by Trépanier and Yvan Lamonde.<sup>22</sup> The number of studies devoted to caricature in Québec – or in Canada as a whole – remains very small, whether these studies are monographic or comparative.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Charles C. Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, 1975); Jean-René Ostiguy, *Les esthétiques moderne au Québec de 1916 à 1946* (Ottawa : Galerie nationale du Canada, Musées nationaux du Canada, 1982); Esther Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité au Québec 1919-1939* (Montréal, Éditions Nota Bene, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> Yvan Lamonde and Esther Trépanier, eds. *L'avènement de la modernité culturelle au Québec* (Québec : Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1986).

<sup>23</sup> Some come from wider interdisciplinary fields of history studies: Carman Cumming, *Sketches from a Young Country. The Images of Grip Magazine*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997; Réal Brisson, *Oka par la caricature: deux visions distinctes d'une même crise* (Sillery, Septentrion, 2000); Raymond

The period leading to the Quiet Revolution has been revisited by Gilles Bourque, Alain-G. Gagnon, Gérard Bouchard and Jocelyn Létourneau, who have re-examined data and historiographical records to challenge and make clear the mythic status that has befallen highly contradictory movements within the pre 1960 period. A study such as this affirms that visual art should also be extensively considered as among the era's "texts".<sup>24</sup>

Caricature in particular, like all satirical forms, can play a useful role because, as we shall see, it is often used in order to resolve or hide contradictions, participating in the era's mythic constructions.

When we turn to non-Canadian traditions of caricature studies, we find contemporary methodological examples that offer highly useful tools in themselves and that are emblematic of the juncture between research and institutional activity in the constitution

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Morris, *The Carnivalization of Politics: Quebec Cartoons on Relations with Canada, England, and France, 1960-1979*. Montréal; Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995. Within the discipline of art history we find Nicole Allard, "Un graveur et caricaturiste à l'aube de la confédération," in Mario Béland, ed. *Jean-Baptiste Côté caricaturiste et sculpteur* (Québec, Musée du Québec/Publications du Québec, 1996): 33-65; "Hector Berthelot, 1842-1895, et la caricature dans la petite presse satirique au Québec entre 1860 et 1895" (unpublished MA thesis, Université Laval, Sainte-Foy, Québec, 1997). For Henri Julien, see Hardy (1998). In Québec, and in the wider Canadian context, the scarcity of studies devoted to caricature's practitioners and imagery may be linked to fascinating disciplinary and institutional divisions. The National Gallery of Canada, Library and Archives Canada, the McCord Museum of Canadian History, the Musée des beaux-arts du Québec and the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, all have important collections of original or printed caricature (and when printed, this is imagery effectively in the state of "originality" often intended at caricature's creation). Each of these institutions has mounted exhibitions and published scholarly research on caricature, or has included caricature in wider projects relating to the representation of prints and drawings, or focused around the interpretation of the historical sources of an era.

<sup>24</sup> Gérard Bouchard, *La pensée impuissante: échecs et mythes nationaux Canadiens-français, 1850-1960* (Montréal, Boréal, 2004) and *Les deux chanoines. contradiction et ambivalence dans la pensée de Lionel Groulx* (Montréal, Boréal, 2003); Gilles Bourque, Jules Duchastel and Jacques Beauchemin, *La société libérale duplessiste 1944-1960* (Montréal, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1994); Jocelyn Létourneau, "La révolution tranquille, catégorie identitaire", in Alain-G. Gagnon and Michel Sarra-Bourret, eds. *Duplessis entre la Grande Noirceur et la société libérale*, 99-117 (Montréal, Éditions Québec-Amérique, 1997); Jocelyn Létourneau, *Passer à l'avenir : histoire, mémoire, identité dans le Québec d'aujourd'hui* (Montréal, Boréal, 2000).



of caricature studies as a field of study. Mark Hallett and Diana Donald have produced studies of caricature in the ages of Hogarth and late Georgian England that comprehensively knit together the physical, intellectual and artistic matrices that account for the production, reception and consumption of caricature.<sup>25</sup> Hallett characterizes early eighteenth-century graphic satire in ways that bear directly on the matters we have outlined above. He is concerned to connect the internal processes of graphic satire, among which physiognomic caricature operates as part of an arsenal of other emblematic references and rhetorical processes, to key networks of dissemination. Hallett sees graphic satire in eighteenth-century London as an artistic hybrid bearing on a range of political issues, enjoying a “crucial but ambivalent relationship with narratives and representations of ‘politeness’” and that is, in its engraved, printed and disseminated form, responsive to the print market. Satirical art participated in the world of entertainment and consumerism in the contemporary city, and the researcher must relate it to other cultural products and events: the pamphlets, plays, tracts and exhibitions that were being manufactured and staged in eighteenth-century London.<sup>26</sup> Also key for Hallett’s study is the preponderant value accorded to satire in eighteenth-century English literature, thought and politics (for the same reason, one of our first tasks will be to define this climate in its wider perspectives for LaPalme). Also common to eighteenth-century London and twentieth-century Montréal is the importance of the individual, distinctive signature that enabled the drawn image to be distinguished from others in the same visual culture.

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<sup>25</sup> Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Yale University Press, 1996); Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth*. (New Haven, Conn.: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> Hallett, op. cit. : 2, 173.

David Kerr has studied the caricature journalism of Charles Philipon in the July Monarchy, tracing the meanings articulated by Philipon's caricature journals from conception through their dissemination along a quite specific infrastructure of distribution through the metropolitan Paris area and the French regions.<sup>27</sup> These methodologies are close in kind to that systematically developed by Jean de Bonville (1988) for his exhaustive study of newspaper production in the 1880-1914 period, a crucial instrument for our study of Julien.<sup>28</sup> In the present study, we consider LaPalme's caricatures as they are presented over similar networks that circulated conflicted meanings openly and tacitly. These meanings are acquired and nurtured through relationships with events, subjects and patrons, in dialogue with prior historical instances that form the intellectual and visual culture of the caricature produced in Québec and, of course, in dialogue with the reader.

This dialogue has long been silenced and invisible. In 1960, Gérard Morisset wrote that the caricatural aspect of Henri Julien's oeuvre was irrelevant, since the contexts that had given the key to its appreciation had long vanished. This vanishing was perhaps necessary and purposeful.<sup>29</sup> The fact that LaPalme's own career, so closely allied to that of Duplessis, collapsed not long after the latter's death, is perhaps linked to Morisset's

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<sup>27</sup> David S. Kerr, *Caricature and French Political Culture 1830-1848. Charles Philipon and the Illustrated Press*. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Jean de Bonville, *La Presse québécoise de 1884 À 1914. Genèse d'un média de masse* (Ste Foy, Québec, Presses de l'université Laval, 1988); *Les quotidiens montréalais de 1945-1985 : morphologie et contenu* (Québec, Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1995).

<sup>29</sup> Gérard Morisset, *La peinture traditionnelle au Canada français* (Ottawa, Cercle du livre de France, 1960): 152.

assertion in important ways. The institutions of art history in Québec and Canada have largely held, as did Morisset, other priorities for research and exhibition.

## Chapter Two

**“Nous ne serions pas de race française si nous ne goûtions l’art de la caricature”**

**The recourse to caricature in Québec (1899-1935) and the early career of Robert LaPalme (1932-1935)**

Nous avons noté l’autre jour la caricature de curé – avec le coup de crayon du dessinateur anticlérical d’autrefois, en France, - qui avoisinait dans le *Canada* un homme politique déguisé en danseuse : nous avons demandé au *Canada* ce que cet ecclésiastique venait faire dans le paysage.

*Le Devoir* calls LaPalme to account, March 1944

With these vexed words Omer Héroux, longstanding editor-in-chief of *Le Devoir*, challenged *Le Canada* to explain itself about a caricature drawn a few days earlier by LaPalme. LaPalme had drawn André Laurendeau, nationalist editor of *L’Action nationale* and Québec leader of the Bloc populaire party, as a female Spanish dancer, a mustachioed coquette with a fan and sashaying hips. Scurrying away in the distance, a clerical figure seen from behind evoked the well-known silhouette of Abbé Lionel Groulx, the cleric and historian who had been a spokesman for French-Canadian nationalism since the beginning of the century (Figure 1-1).

Having called to memory the ‘anticlerical’ artist of long-ago, Héroux’s readers would understand the allusion to the tradition of violent caricature in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Republican France. Peopled by urinating and fornicating priests and nuns, these drawings relentlessly demonized the French Catholic Church. France’s Third

Republic had accomplished the disestablishment of the Church and the secularization of society in ways that had provoked bitter divisions. French political and cultural life was drastically polarized; a veritable uncivil war was fought in its irrepressible polemical press, in which generations of inventive pamphleteers and caricaturists fought on extremes of left and right with an impressive palette of personal vituperation and character assassination.

The “coup de crayon du dessinateur anticlérical d’autrefois, en France,” is another of the ghosts, alongside Baudelaire, present in the contexts for LaPalme’s work on Duplessis.

Bertrand Tillier, a principal researcher of the 1870-1939 period in French caricature, has explained what is at stake:

Le corps et le visage deviennent, en écho à la personnalisation extrême du pouvoir, les supports symboliques et iconographiques des multiples accusations et dénonciations que prodigue la caricature. Le corps devient un lieu de fracture physique, morale et politique, avec le but de déconsidérer l’individu représenté, son part ou le group auquel il appartient. En exposant le corps et es traits des victimes, les caricaturistes opèrent un amalgame entre les caractères privés et publics, permettant ainsi de multiplier les attaques sur tous les fronts.

On n’a pas assez, à mon sens, souligné les rapports étroits existant entre la caricature et le corps, si l’on considère – à l’instar des victimes – que la première constitue généralement une insulte pour le second, soit par sa représentation, soit par la trivialité d’une mise en situation. Or dans la charge comme dans l’insulte, le corps occupe une place fondamentale. [L’opposition à la caricature] souligne le caractère grossier, vulgaire, obscène, pornographique, scatologique et insultant de ces images. [Les mécanismes langagiers et expressifs de la caricature] procèdent de la critique comme injure. [...] Les linguistes on depuis longtemps analysé l’hyperprésence du corps et de ses fonctions physiologiques dans l’injure et l’insulte, celui-ci étant le siège unique de toutes nos sensations et de notre affectivité.<sup>1</sup>

Although LaPalme would indeed come to formulate just such an “hyperprésence du corps

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<sup>1</sup> Bertrand Tillier, *La RépubliCature: La caricature politique en France, 1870-1914* (Paris, CNRS éditions, 1997) : 73. As a methodological investigation of the absences of imagery, see also Tillier’s *La Commune de Paris, révolution sans images? Politique et représentations dans la France républicaine (1871-1914)*

et de ses fonctions physiologiques” there was, in the Québec of the time described by Tillier, nothing quite like it. Québec was then subject to the cultural and political governance and influence of late Victorian and then Edwardian and British Canadian imperialism and the regulations of codes of decorum and politeness that, as we have seen with Mark Hallett, are necessary vectors to the articulation of the limits of caricature and graphic satire. In a sequence that begins with Baudelaire and reaches an apex in the apocalyptic pamphleteering of the ultra-Catholic (but fiercely anti-institutional) Léon Bloy (1843-1917), questions of face and body, after all at the root of caricature itself, re-emerge as central vehicles for the critique of society in all its secular or clerical forms. The physical body, the image, and language, are each in question. They come to be transgressed and destroyed by a hyperbolic deployment through brilliant excesses of pamphleteering speech – an apotheosis of cultural forms seen as fundamentally corrupt and therefore turned against themselves. This mystical critique must also be borne in mind when delving into the political polemics attendant on LaPalme’s capacity to mock Lionel Groulx. Not only identities, but the history of their usages, are all at stake.

The agenda for these usages was given great impetus around 1900 as a new generation of political, journalistic and cultural leaders emerged to reinvigorate the discourses of French Catholic nationalism for Québec. It was the generation of figures such as Groulx, Olivar Asselin and Henri Bourassa, each of whom came to widespread public attention by campaigning for a new French-Canadian political autonomy in response to Canada’s involvement in Great Britain’s South African War against the Boers (1899-1902). Although they emerged in a milieu in which polemical journalism and caricature was

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(Seyssel, Champ Vallon, 2004).

already well-established within certain limits, Groulx, Asselin and Bourassa had the advantage of youthful ambitions in a time of widespread Catholic renewal in Western countries. In France and Québec in particular, the Action sociale catholique movements unleashed by Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical, *Rerum novarum*, brought about a new sense of identity between the two societies, in both of which the Catholic world view was at stake. Their responses to the politics of their time and their actions in transforming the political fabric of their society led to a transformation in the recourse to caricature in Québec.

Our task in the pages that follow is to trace the evolving critical climate for caricature in Québec. We will see that under Lionel Groulx's leadership, cultural projects that would affect Québec's historical self-consciousness set out to define the identity of Québec in the early twentieth century. This era of tremendously growing mass communications guaranteed a role for the visual image as part of these projects and granted special status to leadership in journalism; in Québec's literary history, journalism was long held to be the premier avenue of excellence. Henri Bourassa founded *Le Devoir*, an independent Catholic newspaper, in 1910; the newspaper has become one of the outstandingly influential publications of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Québec. Olivar Asselin brought to Québec the example of French polemical journalism that accorded a place to a spirited use and defence of the French language. He also consistently gave pride of place to political caricature in a way that differentiated it significantly from practices in the main English language newspapers of Britain, Canada and the US. Finally, by his example and his nurturing, Asselin inspired the journalists, reporters, editorialists and caricaturists who

came to prominence in the years just before his death in 1937 until the 1960s.

This whole period, of the so-called *Grande Noirceur*, saw the flourishing of an opposition-in-journalism that had learned its craft and its principles from Asselin. Robert LaPalme was of their number. As we will see throughout the chapters of this thesis, the story of LaPalme's achievements in caricature begins, and in surprising ways, ends, with a legacy that Olivar Asselin made possible for his followers. This legacy is involved with attaining the full potential that language and religious faith can reach in constructing a secular society. Within this legacy the tragic irony of self-awareness was paramount. Asselin thus lent a smiling irony in all aspects of the deeply serious ambitions he had for French Canadian society. Political caricature and graphic satire had a role in each of his endeavours.

We will turn to Asselin's circumstances in due to course to see how and why this was so. As may be surmised, it was not so for all his contemporaries. There was also a pervasive resistance to the ironic, the satirical and the caricatural in Québec's cultural projects. But as we shall see, such resistances often were put up in the defence of ideal visions of Québec society; and as any ideal warrants a good fight, this fight itself could easily degenerate into caricatural attack. Our purpose here is not only to chart positions but to account for the ambiguities they tacitly expressed. The ideals of a Lionel Groulx were articulated around exemplary behaviour of the individual and the nation in its conception of its role in the wider firmament under God. Groulx defined ideals for his 'petit peuple'. Caricature by its very nature attends on the ideal, rises in its wake, mocks it with its own



terms, modulates it to provoke laughter, or violently transgresses it to cause outrage. Our foremost concern is of course for visual caricature, but we will attend to the recourse to caricature throughout Québec's cultural expression in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, so as to better understand the wider cultural field in which LaPalme's work took its meaning.

In this way, we hope to describe how Québec's cultural institutions articulated caricature's growing validity, allowing it to operate as a self-reflexive and critical practice in itself, as a widespread cultural rhetorical weapon. These institutions were linked, then as now: visual art, journalism, the literature of ideas, fiction, book production and publishing, theatre; and from the 1920s onwards, broadcasting. As these traces are assembled, we find that these institutions were capable of critically engaging with the ideas of nation-building when they acknowledged their own regulating and polemical force. Caricature, an act of drawing lines that exaggerate, is emblematic of the limits to which this critical force will be put in society. Our work will subsequently enable us to imagine how, in the years of the Second World War and then in the period 1945-1959, Robert LaPalme's caricature came to be one of the first cultural expressions in Québec to allow itself to attain the degree of invective characteristic of Western caricature at large in the era of France's Third Republic – even as Québec's literary and visual arts aligned themselves swiftly with, or in many cases helped to lead, international post-1945 concerns.

In many cultural projects of the period between the Boer War and the Second World War, we find Québec's leading critics at work configuring the purposes (and limits) of what

should and could be represented in literary, artistic and political expression. Across these three spheres lie whatever could be possible for caricature and graphic satire. The place given to caricature and graphic satire was also determined in reference to the closest political models for Québec's political culture, those of France and Britain. These cultural transfers marked Asselin's generation, particularly as he and his closest associates sought to enable both the varied aims and the troublingly attractive violence of Third Republic French political expression to take root in Québec. The presence of caricature in Asselin's polemical journalism was part of this ambition. By the 1930s, when Asselin's career reached its apex and its conclusion, Québec national cultural identity was often argued by proxy, through extraterritorial models. It was also part of international cultural expression and infrastructure in the new era of mass-communications and broadcasting. LaPalme's caricature emerged in this climate, as the projects of codifying French-Canadian literature, art and language, and thereby setting the parameters of nation and culture building, had rapidly become too heterogeneous to contain.

For in the decade of the Depression, the French-Canadian province struggled to make sense of its identities: as a branch of the North American industrialising mass-market system, as a francophone collectivity caught in a British-imperial political network, and as a Catholic society riven between personalist and corporatist visions of social order in the aftermath of World War I and the newly-reconfigured totalitarianisms – at once extensions and rejections of the democratic project – in the Soviet Union, Italy and, most recently for LaPalme at the outset of his career, in Germany. Crucially for any writer or artist defining a political position in interwar Québec, the tensions besetting democracy

found heated ideological expression in Québec society's twin models, Britain and France, and to differing degrees in its surrounding collectivities – English Canada, the United States and Mexico.

Significantly for the political debates in Europe and North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the promises made to the public by democracy – at the level of the writer and artist, the emancipation afforded by free speech and modernist aesthetics - would prove to be a potent weapon for those who were effectively opposed to democracy and sought a popular consensus for its undoing. This struggle would be especially pertinent for Québec. Several of its leaders were ambivalent towards democratic institutions. They were suspicious of the cultural forms that so closely echoed a similar debate in Third Republic France, a nation all of whose serious internecine divisions the leaders of Québec from the 1890s onwards either cherished or feared above all. The background for the recourse to caricature in Québec lay in this very emulation of the forces at war for the soul of France, because the overriding cultural value for Québec's new cultural and political leadership was articulated through the love, defense and combative promotion of the French language and its written expression above all.

By the 1930s, this value had been channeled both in the twin imperatives of the making of a "national art" – whether literary or visual – and in the fostering of a proper and methodical critical-historical apparatus with which to assess and, where necessary and possible, to compare Québec's francophone productions to those of contemporary France and, to a lesser (but evolving) degree, those of the wider international sphere. Within the endeavours of the generation led by Lionel Groulx and Olivar Asselin, many others

would help set the tone in which critical engagement was paramount, and the recourse to satirical polemics (including a caricatural language that traded in attacks, in emblems and excessive characterizations) a given. They were Asselin's close friend and colleague Jules Fournier; the members of the École littéraire de Montréal; the contributors to journals like *Le Terroir* (1909) and *Le Nigog* (1918). They were the journalist-critics Omer Héroux, Jean-Baptiste Lagacé, Victor Barbeau, and Claude-Henri Grignon. They gave aesthetic and ideological battle over what might be the proper form, content and style for Québec's writers and thinkers. While the detailed enunciation of the sometimes sympathetic, sometimes combative positions taken up by each of these agents in turn would fall well outside the scope of this study, it is nonetheless essential to sift through their writings for the traces of the strategies associated to caricature: the deforming portrait, the grotesque and the ironic, the parodic, to see in what measure these strategies are advocated or not; or, indeed, whether they are directly used. As and when they are advocated and used, it will also be important to assess which models, if any, are evoked as justification or can be divined as examples, either through direct evidence or by comparison.

For if we can evaluate how – and more importantly if – caricature was nourished in Québec's literary environment through the transplanting of cultural forms, then we will be in a position to make several crucial assessments. How directly linked was caricature to language in francophone Québec? If the defence of language was made through the exemplary use of the forms which are part of that language's achievements in a culture – thereby, for French, through the literary forms and mediums of grammar, syntax and style

which it has invested – then what conclusions can we reach about the hybrid form of expression that is caricature? How did caricature fare among other visual expressions in the same project? Indeed, as we now set the stage for caricature’s special importance for Québec between the early 1930s and 1959, we will gather evidence that will enable us to usefully ask how the strategies of caricature were emptied out and transferred to other media after the death of Maurice Duplessis ushered in the Quiet Revolution. For the ascendancy of the hybrid form that is caricature came in a period of the primacy of self-reflexive, historicising broadcasting culture – in which print was joined by radio, cinema and later television – leading to a true internationalisation for Québec society and its language which transformed the Québec state, the ultimate subject of (and for) representation.

## **1. Prescription: Language, Culture and Caricature after 1899**

### **1.1. Camille Roy**

Representation began with language itself. In the first decade of the twentieth century came resolute attempts at institutionalising an exemplary use of French that struggled with its permeability to “canadianisms”, through the Société du parler français. There were also attempts at codifying a history of French-Canadian literature. These initiatives laid the basis for critical parameters that might operate with validity as the corpus would grow. In both, leadership was assumed by the abbé (later Monseigneur) Camille Roy (1878-1943), a member of the teaching clergy at Université Laval. Through speeches

carefully collated and anthologised from 1904 onwards, and through his epochal *Manuel d'histoire de la littérature canadienne-française* of 1918, Roy attempted to establish a criticism of French-Canadian letters that would allow a measure of its place within the realm of French literature overall.<sup>2</sup> In this decade of renewed national purpose, a critical mass was fashioned by Roy, by Henri Bourassa (1868-1952), and by the abbé Lionel Groulx (1878-1967). It reframed the ultramontane spirit in Québec society that had been exemplified by the uncompromising Jules Tardivel (1851-1905) and his newspaper *La Vérité* (1881-1923), while somewhat neutralised by the coalition-building Liberal party of Wilfrid Laurier after its victory in 1896. Given a channel for new energy around the projects of defence of French-Canadian language, faith and national characteristics, fresh attempts were made at defining (thus, providing a critical climate for) the constituent objectives that should obtain for each of these areas. A scientific spirit of enquiry permeated to a strong degree the definition of these objectives, as Roy, active at the Université Laval, effectively sought to re-invent the French language in Canada as a disciplinary field through his work with the Société du parler français after 1902.<sup>3</sup> In concert with a keen attention to the pleasures and vagaries of literary form, in the context of a desired comparability to counterparts in French literary traditions, the critical climate fostered by Roy sought to establish a “nationalisation de la Littérature canadienne-française,” no less than a subject-programme for Québec's literature, with special

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<sup>2</sup> Camille Roy, *Manuel d'histoire de la littérature canadienne-française* (Québec : imprimerie de l'Action sociale, 1918).

<sup>3</sup> One of the chief recent sources for the projects of the Société du parler français and the climate for critical approaches to literature in French Canada at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century comes in Marie-Andrée Beaudet, *Langue et littérature au Québec 1895-1914* (Montréal: l'Hexagone, 1992). See particularly ‘Le règne de la Société du parler français au Canada’, in the chapter «Champ littéraire et champ linguistique» [37-58]:54-58, and the chapter devoted to «Camille Roy : Le grand programmeur» [87-106]. Roy's *Manuel d'histoire...*, in its many editions, is discussed by Lucie Robert in *Le manuel d'histoire de la*

attention paid to poetry and the novel as the highest of the hierarchy of literary genres.

The reverence paid to a certain vision of France and its foundational position in Québec culture - to a quite specific vision of a pre-revolutionary, indeed 17<sup>th</sup> century France which is held to survive in the language and customs of rural Québeckers - the Habitants – was signalled when Roy drew attention, apologetically, to the inordinate importance of journalism in its history through a direct allusion to caricature made in 1905. In “Des progrès du journalisme canadien-français,” dated October 1905, Roy delivered a stinging criticism of images and advertizing displays in newspaper pages.<sup>4</sup> His wry comments on Montréal newspapers *La Presse* and *La Patrie* lead us to divine his denigration of their very theatrical character. We see the banner of a vision for a Québec society re-espousing pre-industrial, pre-revolutionary, pre-Conquest French values through language. Indeed the concert of these factors is quite explicitly clear : “Il faut pour publier de si volumineux quotidiens, outre l'esprit barnumesque de la direction, tout le secours du machinisme le plus moderne.”<sup>5</sup> An imagined absent French audience, representative of these cherished values, is ever hovering nearby: “Les touristes de France les envoient à leurs familles et à leurs amis comme de parfaits échantillons de l'extravagance américaine, et des exemplaires certains d'un journalisme mal équilibré.”<sup>6</sup>

Roy explicitly criticised grotesque images, which appeal to “children and their like,” and

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*littérature de Mgr. Camille Roy* (Québec, Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> From Camille Roy, «Des progrès du journalisme canadien-français», dated October 1905, and reprinted in *Essais sur la littérature canadienne* (Montréal, Librairie Beauchemin, 1913 [1907 edition reprint]): 207–214.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: 207.

gave as an example Ladébauche, the character developed by Hector Berthelot in 1877 and relaunched by Albéric Bourgeois, who had just left *La Patrie* to join *La Presse* in 1905. Bourgeois's weekly column, written "as if" by the Père Ladébauche who was literally "drawn in" to the commentary, would incarnate, in the figure of a Habitant, an ensuing half-century of gentle, commonsensical political satire; he was effectively a character, ever re-appearing, ever given new lines, in the equivalent of a long-running and ever-renewed theatrical revue (Figure 2-2). A Punchinello had invaded the satirical tradition to build a reflection of society over time, truly completing the transition from the single print to the realm of the ongoing companionship to a newspaper which, to survive, must indeed build loyalty among its customers - its readers. The likelihood of this would be anathema to Mgr. Roy :

Qu'on ne nous dise pas que le journalisme montréalais correspond à un goût public très spécial qui n'existe pas en des pays européens, et qui serait le goût américain. Il est possible, il est certain que l'américain se complaît dans l'extravagant, dans l'imprévu, dans le burlesque et qu'il aime à mêler ensemble les choses qui sont le moins faites pour se rencontrer; il peut se faire que le journaliste américain s'ingénie à rapprocher les disparates, l'esprit et la platitude, le sérieux et la caricature; mais laissons aux américains leurs excès et leurs manies, et nous, qui faisons revivre sur ce continent l'âme française, et sa vertu civilisatrice, sachons garder ici et fortifier et répandre ces traditions de bon goût, de tact, de mesure, de haute convenance qui sont l'héritage le plus précieux de notre génie national.<sup>7</sup>

In this statement lie so many issues for caricature in Québec. It is too much part of an observable American phenomenon; it is burlesque, part of the excessive and strains at the edges, – from the outside, thinks Roy – of the national characteristics of Québec. It is clearly articulated as a low cultural form and identified as an undesirable practice. Roy makes no mention of the time-honoured presence of caricature in the public press of

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.: 208.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid : 210.



France, caricature which has since the July revolution claimed the rights of freedom of speech against a succession of monarchical and Imperial political systems which operated in direct alliance with the French clergy. The ultramontane spirit is ever alive in its gaze towards both Paris and Rome, which seem but mother cities of a world uncontaminated by the popular practices of disquiet. Ironically, their values are held to survive in Québec only at the level of popular culture which must therefore be itself sanitized and which must be (to forge two neologisms) de-grotesqued, de-caricatured. This is precisely the operation which seems to take effect as Roy and his followers establish the criteria for the creation and the evaluation of a “true” French-Canadian literature.

## **1.2. Caricature and Terroir**

One of the immediate consequences of this activity could be measured in some of the activities carried out by caricaturist and illustrator Henri Julien (1852-1908) in his last years. Considered in light of his relationship to writers and polemicists, from Berthelot and Beaugrand through to the École littéraire de Montréal, the projects of Julien’s final years tell us much about the uneasy place of caricature among the projects of this first decade of programme-building. Julien can really only be identified through his work and through what we know about the company he kept; there are almost no instances that record his own words directly, unlike Bourgeois and LaPalme.<sup>8</sup> A rare exception is

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<sup>8</sup> The sheer extent of the LaPalme archive is discussed in Chapter 1. There are similarly extensive resources available for Albéric Bourgeois, foremost at the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), where the fonds contains some 3,200 original caricatures, 2,500 press clippings, original drawings, manuscripts for radio broadcasts and newspapers columns and personal papers. BANQ, Fonds Albéric Bourgeois, MSS-346.

found in the interview he gave to “Françoise” (Robertine du Barry) in the Spring of 1908, in which she affirms the value of Julien's drawings for the *Star's* sales.<sup>9</sup> Bourgeois, in 1927, stated that Julien was not a caricaturist, that he did not have in him the qualities of vituperation necessary for the true caricaturist and that Julien told him that caricature was a “dirty business.”<sup>10</sup> Was this a change of heart or evidence of a conflicted position? We can only wonder at the effect of the call for a nationalist literature on an artist who had for over twenty years already been associated with the depiction of the Québec of legend and story before these had been claimed in the name of ideological theory by Roy and his followers. The latter can hardly been fond of the involvement of Freemason writers such as Beaugrand and Fréchette, both illustrated by Julien, in the furthering of a French Canadian literature. The matter takes on a new resonance if we consider what was truly a change of heart, the shift noticed in the character of the École littéraire de Montréal from 1900 to 1909. In 1900, at the dawn of the new era of religious-focused nationalism in Québec, the École published its *Soirées du Château de Ramezay*, taken from its series of readings in 1898-99. Here the will to accede to the province of European modernism was paramount, with its summit the contemporary cultural productions of France. Louis Fréchette, unofficial but acknowledged *poète national*, was the honorary president of the

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<sup>9</sup> Robertine Barry (1863-1910), chronicler at *La Patrie*, also figured in the circle of intellectuals and journalists surrounding Olivar Asselin. See Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, *Olivar Asselin et son temps. Tome I : le militant* (Montreal, Fides, 1996): 99-100.

<sup>10</sup> “En collaboration avec les Berthelot et les Fréchette il a fait des chefs-d'oeuvres. Le fait est qu'après la mort de Berthelot [1895] Julien n'a plus fait de caricature. À mes débuts dans la carrière, Henri Julien, qui bien que beaucoup plus âgé que moi, m'honorait de son amitié, me disait un jour, à propos d'une charge politique que j'avais faite pour le compte de feu l'hon. Tarte : ‘La caricature; n'allez pas vous embarquer là-dedans. C'est une sale affaire pour un artiste. À force de faire de la charge on finit par ne plus savoir faire autrement’. À ce moment, il venait de terminer pour le *Star* cette fine satire qui s'appelle ‘Les By-Town Coons’ et qui furent les dernières caricatures politiques du maître.” Albéric Bourgeois, “En roulant ma boule”, *La Presse* [Montréal], 19 November 1927 : 25. This statement, if reliable, allows us to date a change of heart at either 1899, year in which the *By-Town Coons* actually appeared; or, more likely at 1904, year of a federal election, as the *Star* re-ran the cartoons and Bourgeois was working for Israel Tarte's

group. It is the time of the ascendancy of Emile Nelligan. The unmistakable qualities of Nelligan's poetry which appear to his contemporaries to vie with the best of symbolist poetry in France would later be admitted by Roy as he re-fashioned his critical stance to include Nelligan. But for most such endeavours Roy reserved a language of disappointment at talents used awry. The years of Roy's own ascendancy coincided with the dissolution of the École. On reuniting in late 1908 with an altered membership, the members signed a commemorative text in memory of the recently-deceased Henri Julien. Among them was Gonzalve Desaulniers, a respected judge, a freemason and sometimes poet, who could be found at Hector Berthelot's gin *soirées* in 1890, along with Godfroy Langlois (to be the first editor of *Le Canada* in 1902), Arthur Buies and Honoré Beaugrand.<sup>11</sup> Julien himself was probably among them as well.<sup>12</sup> There was a new tone to the École's 1908 pronouncement which presaged the following year's publication of its journal, *Le Terroir*. Painter and poet Charles Gill was mentioned in the Spring 1908 AAM exhibition reviews as one of the "jeunes ou demi-jeunes" along with William Brymner, Henri Julien and others of whom much was to be expected.<sup>13</sup> He made a sad statement in the preface to the first issue of *Le Terroir* in January 1909: "Nous assistons

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*Patrie*. If 1904 is indeed the date, Julien's changing position might be linked to the emerging work of Roy.

<sup>11</sup> The personages are placed at the gin *soirées* by Patrice Dutil in his *Devil's Advocate. Godfroy Langlois and the politics of Liberal Progressivism in Laurier's Quebec* (Montreal, Robert Davies Publishing, 1994):55. There can be no mistake about the oppositional stance taken up by the clergy towards Freemasonry and its adherents, however respectable they may have become in Québec society. In 1913, Desaulniers is invited to take part in literary readings organised by Olivar Asselin, new president of the Société Saint-Jean Baptiste, to replace the customary symbolism of sheep and procession. As Asselin's biographer Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon relates (in *Olivar Asselin et son temps. Tome 1: Le militant* (Montréal, Fides, 1996): 592, "Le jour même de la manifestation, Mgr Bruchési menace donc de fermer personnellement la grande salle de l'Université prêtée pour circonstance, si Desaulniers s'y produit. Peu soucieux d'envenimer le débat et de compromettre son ami Asselin, Desaulniers s'éclipse rapidement".

<sup>12</sup> Julien kept in his belongings a proof of the design for an invitation to a fundraising effort by Berthelot following the latter's conviction for libel in 1889. See LAC, fonds Julien, MG 29 D 103 vol. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Unattributed clipping citation, spring 1908, in LAC, fonds Julien, MG 29 D103 vol. 2.

avec amertume à l'agonie de nos rêves. L'enthousiasme des premiers jours est disparu, faisant place à un sentiment plus tenace : celui du devoir.”<sup>14</sup>

With Julien's own work in these years accordingly marked by a concentration on Terroir subjects, it is almost as though the contradictions and conflicts that marked the struggle between “regionalists and exotics” in this and the following three decades were incarnated in his own project. Julien's principal submissions to the Art Association of Montreal's Spring exhibition in 1906 and 1907 bore this sense of struggle. In 1906, his celebrated oil painting *La Chasse-Galerie* (now in the collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec) earned terrific approbation. It was a subject he had illustrated many times for Honoré Beaugrand, since the latter first published his tale in the New Year's Eve edition of *La Patrie* in December 1891. Julien's illustrations had begun with the publication of an English language translation of the tale in the *Century Magazine* of New York in September 1892. Thereafter Julien returned to the subject on many occasions. The 1906 oil painting marked his efforts to work in the medium which had the highest status in Canadian art. It should now also perhaps be seen as a homage to Beaugrand, who died in the same year; for the matter-of-fact, spirited illustrations Julien had previously offered gave way to a late-Romantic, almost Wagnerian conception of composition and atmosphere.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Reprinted in Marie-Andrée Beaudet, *op. cit.*: 194, n. 78. On p. 136. Mme Beaudet remarks on the influence of Roy's undertakings : «Par ailleurs, il faut reconnaître que, si les positions littéraires de la Société ont acquis une telle audience et une telle force de domination dans le champ littéraire québécois, jusqu'à drainer sur leur passage les énergies restantes de l'École littéraire de Montréal, c'est en très large partie grâce aux liens privilégiés que les dirigeants de la Société entretenaient avec le milieu de l'enseignement et grâce à l'organisation matérielle et humaine qui servait de support à la grande enquête lexicographique lancée par la Société.»

<sup>15</sup> The links and tantalizing correspondences between Henri Julien and the École littéraire de Montréal are explored in the writer's “Ce diable d'homme. Henri Julien à l'heure de l'École littéraire de Montréal”, in Micheline Cambron, ed., *La vie culturelle à Montréal vers 1900* (Montréal, Fides/Bibliothèque nationale du

Julien's 1907 work *La Criée*, on the other hand, was far closer to his usual illustrational vein, indeed remarkably close in spirit to a coinciding text entitled *La Criée pour les âmes*, written by Roy's colleague Adjutor Rivard for the Bulletin de la Société du Parler Français and reprinted in the 1918 volume *Chez nos gens*. In discussing this and other texts by Rivard, François Hébert has noted that

on ne saurait dire au juste s'il s'agit de récits, de contes ou d'histoires, construits à partir de descriptions de lieux ou de scènes du village ou de la campagne [...] nous croyons que leur dépouillement manifeste un style qui, paraissant ressasser des lieux communs, touche aux archétypes. La recherche de Rivard [...] est poétique; et peu sereine : Rivard lui-même définit la poésie "comme ce mal dont on a honte."<sup>16</sup>

This reaching towards archetype, tinged with a certain sorrow, appears to pervade Julien, Rivard and the members of the École littéraire de Montréal. Is the archetype the antithesis of the caricatural?

### 1.3. Lionel Groulx

The answer, in true mitigating form, might best be this: the two can be, but need not be, antithetical. We can reliably extend the fear of mixity and the search for universals in Roy's brief blast against caricature and examine the spirit that prevails not only for Roy and Rivard but above all for the abbé Lionel Groulx who more than any other figure established a doctrinaire theoretical position for the *projets de société* which he felt must govern Québec's present and future. These were firmly rooted in the past. In his

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Québec, 2005): 157-173.

<sup>16</sup> In Gilles Marcotte, dir., *Anthologie de la littérature québécoise Tome II : Volume 3. Vaisseau d'or et*

*Directives*, he declared : “Nous renouer à un grand passé, réaliser un grand avenir, c'est notre programme de vie et notre seule chance de vie. Pour accepter ce destin, sans peur come sans orgueil, il suffirait de nous souvenir que c'est le propre de tout peuple catholique d'avoir une grande histoire.”<sup>17</sup> Certainly his description of the Habitant in his *Histoire du Canada français depuis la découverte* shows how important it was that the people of New France be, for the purposes of history, a unitary type.<sup>18</sup> Although this was written by Groulx in 1950-52, a kindred spirit had informed the appreciation of Julien's portrayal of the Habitant figure, in articles that appeared in the year before his death and in the ensuing memorial writings. These were in concert with the culture of the Habitant which pervaded the 1890s and 1900s. Examples were found in the writings of not only Beaugrand and Fréchette, but also in W. H. Drummond' s 1897 collection of poems *The Habitant*, prefaced by Fréchette, in Rivard's “archetypal” writings, and in Julien's and Albéric Bourgeois' drawings. Together, these works signalled an entrenchment of type, seized as an abstraction from a process which bore little shading of meaning. The type permitted a humorous counterfoil to the very desire that identity could be so fixed.

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*croix du chemin 1895-1935* par Gilles Marcotte et François Hébert (Montréal : Hexagone, 1994): 34.

<sup>17</sup> Excerpt from *Directives* (Montreal: Zodiaque, 1937): 189-204, reprinted in Marcotte, op. cit.: 146.

<sup>18</sup> “L'habitant”, from *Histoire du Canada français depuis la découverte (1950-52)*(Montréal, Fides, 1960): 287-292, reprinted in Marcotte, op. cit.: 146-151.

## 2. Performance: From page to stage, the climate for caricature in Montréal, 1927-1934

### 2.1. Olivar Asselin and caricature in *journalisme de combat*

Lionel Groulx's theocentric vision for Québec was nourished by the radiating force of Henri Bourassa between 1900 and 1910, culminating with the foundation of *Le Devoir*. But it was not the sole vision for the defense of language and culture in Québec. Although also deeply influenced by and committed to the vision of Bourassa, as we have already seen, the young nationalist Olivar Asselin established a different direction that would come to struggle against the clerical world-view for the best pathways for Québec. Asselin's vision was founded on a deep love for the French language and for France, but he was above all a journalist and pamphleteer, a man of true ironical bent who acted as a lightning rod for the earliest spirit common to the École littéraire de Montréal. In his final years, after 1930, Asselin would be the first editor to recognize and encourage the work of Robert LaPalme, and would publish it in his papers, first of all at *Le Canada* in 1933 and, in 1934 and 1935, at *L'Ordre* and *La Renaissance*.<sup>19</sup> An account of his actions with respect to the same issues as those engaged with by Roy and Groulx should enable us to understand how he came to create a supportive climate for caricature.

In a long career as a nationalist journalist and editor, Asselin was involved in many combative projects. As an expatriate French-Canadian of farming stock growing up in the northern United States in the 1880s and 1890s, Asselin had received a classical education

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<sup>19</sup> Robert LaPalme. *La caricature et autres sujets sérieux. Entretiens avec Jean-François Nadeau*

and known work in manufacturing before joining the US Army to fight the Spanish in Cuba in 1898, gaining first-hand experience of a conflict between imperialisms and visions of the free destiny of nations and peoples which returned with him to Québec in 1899. He was connected to three political newspapers between 1899 and 1910 that would in turn carry the flag of Québec francophone nationalism and rally round the leadership of Henri Bourassa. He began at *Les débats* (1899-1902) founded by Louvigny de Montigny as a response to Wilfrid Laurier's policy of compromise in permitting a volunteer armed contingent to participate on behalf of Canada in Britain's war with the Boers of South Africa (1899-1902). De Montigny and Asselin followed Henri Bourassa's leadership in parliament: the young nationalist leader led the resistance of most Québec MP's to Laurier's policy, arguing for Canadian non-intervention in Britain's imperial skirmishes. Asselin was the founding editor of *Le nationaliste* (1904-1910); in 1908 he gave way to his friend Jules Fournier when Bourassa asked for Asselin's assistance against Laurier in the summer federal election. Two years later Asselin and Fournier were on the founding staff of Henri Bourassa's *Le Devoir*, although both resigned after a few months, leaving fellow young nationalist Omer Héroux as Bourassa's right-hand man.

Asselin's generation built a new nationalism for Québec, one that came to replenish the forces often engaged in exhausting battles. Its roots wound around the traditional conflicts of Canadian history: the Conquest, the rebellion of 1837, Confederation, the Riel rebellions and the ongoing struggle between Rouges and the ultramontanes to define the agendas for Québec society – progressive or conservative. The specific impetus guiding Asselin's generation lay in Canada's role in Britain's war against the South

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(Montréal, l'Hexagone, 1997) (hereafter LaPalme 1997): 43.



African Boers; this generation largely rallied to Bourassa's call for Québec to be an autonomous society guided by language and faith, albeit firmly within the guarantees laid out by the British North America Act. It coalesced an anti-imperialist and anti-military movement whose logic led to the resistance to Conscription during World War I.

This anti-imperialism found common cause in Asselin and Fournier in particular because it would allow them to champion what they saw as the best of French civilisation, the defense of language and faith that took form in a vigorously free polemical expression – one which would inevitably lead them to part with Henri Bourassa soon after *Le Devoir's* foundation. Asselin encouraged Fournier who became the foremost satirical political commentator of his time; both men were in turn jailed for their activities, and shared a close friendship and communality of purpose until Fournier's untimely death from the influenza epidemic in 1918. Asselin memorialised his colleague by organizing and prefacing a 1921 anthology, *Mon encrier*, which brought together the best-known examples of Fournier's unforgiving yet good-natured humour in the face of mediocrities in Canadian and Québec politics and culture.

It was *sorties* such as this that kept Asselin in the public eye after his break with Bourassa in 1911, for his career as a full-time journalist ceased until 1930, when he accepted the editorship of the *Le Canada*, a money-losing but strategically vital mass-market Montreal newspaper financed directly by the federal Liberal Party's election fund. Although his accession to this editorial chair raised nationalist eyebrows because of its federal support, Asselin had already definitively announced his independence of spirit in 1917 – and

gained widespread public notoriety – by raising a francophone regiment to fight for France and, by association at least, for the very imperialist system he had long decried. Yet he thereby made a highly mediated personal commitment in defense of the values for which he had fought throughout his career at Bourassa's side and since, those of a vision of the importance of France to Québec life.

For LaPalme himself, the memory of his beginnings with Asselin makes the support resoundingly clear :

J'ai exposé pour la première fois dans le vestibule du Théâtre Stella, aujourd'hui devenu le théâtre du Rideau Vert. Ce fut, d'un coup, le succès. Nous sommes en décembre [1933]. *Le Canada*, journal concurrent du *Devoir*, me consacre presque toute sa page éditoriale! Je commence alors à dessiner pour *Le Canada*. Ma première chance, c'est le directeur du *Canada*, Olivar Asselin, qui me l'a donnée.<sup>20</sup>

## **2.2. From *Chat Noir* to *Matou Botté*: Albéric Bourgeois**

The juncture of LaPalme with theatre and Olivar Asselin is telling. In the years before Asselin featured him in *Le Canada* for the first time, LaPalme had come into contact with the great caricaturist of his own childhood, Albéric Bourgeois, as he recalled in his preface to Léon-A. Robidoux's 1974 *Albéric Bourgeois, caricaturiste*:

J'ai revu Bourgeois prononçant des conférences [...] au *Matou Botté* [...] cette boîte de nuit installée face à l'université de Montréal rue Saint-Denis, juste à côté. Du chic restaurant Kurluhu Odiau, Lucille Turner, la Monique Leyrac du temps, chantait avec Gaston St Jacques et d'autres, alors que Bourgeois dessinait, vêtu d'une chienne, le béret de côté, la cigarette aux lèvres, pour un public composé de notables qui espéraient revivre là quelques moments de leur vie de bohème à

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

Paris: Edouard Montpetit, le gros Gustave Monette...<sup>21</sup>

Robidoux himself recounts that “en deuxième partie, Bourgeois apparaissait [...] pour préparer ses *Chatnoiries*, une fricassée de caricatures et chansons humoristiques.”<sup>22</sup> The vie de bohème Montpetit, Monette and Bourgeois invoke was that of Rodolphe Salis’s Montmartre cabaret and journal *Le Chat Noir* (1881-1897).<sup>23</sup> A fixture of the *milieus* of naturalist and symbolist poets and artists in the last twenty years of nineteenth-century Paris, the *Chat noir* was remembered in 1926 by French writer Maurice Donnay for rampant eclecticism of the world over which Salis presided: “[...] combien il fut éclectique ce *Chat Noir*, tour à tour et à la fois blagueur, ironique, cynique, lyrique, fumiste, religieux mystique, chrétien, païen, anarchiste, chauvin, républicain,

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<sup>21</sup> Léon-A. Robidoux, *Albéric Bourgeois, caricaturiste* (Montréal, vlb éditeur et Médiabec, 1978): 18. Édouard Montpetit (1881-1954) directly recalled the *Chat noir* in his memoirs : « Surtout, nous allions chez les chansonniers, les vrais, ceux qui faisaient leurs chanson même pour nous, devant nous, dans les boîtes, comme on disait, depuis Fursy et son Chat-noir, où nous savions que ce mandarin parvenu, l’homme aux lèvres épaisses et aux cheveux bleus, Maurice Donnay, avait, un soir d’oubli, commencé sa merveilleuse carrière. / Dans ce milieu presque intime, épris de blague et d’esprit, vibrant au moindre mot, nous cueillions, sur les hauteurs de Montmartre ou à Montparnasse, des fleurs d’un soir, aussitôt fanées, mais d’un parfum subtil ou amer qui nous poursuivait » Edouard Montpetit, *Souvenirs. I : vers la vie* (Montréal, Éditions de l’arbre, 1944) : pp. 90-91. Montpetit’s 1907-1910 stay in France takes up some three quarters of this volume, pp. 65-207. As a portrait of a future Québec leader experiencing at first hand the elements that give rise to the love of France, this volume is especially useful : see in particular Montpetit’s experience of the École des sciences politiques founded in reaction to the perceived cause of France’s foolish declaration war against Prussia, the mediocrity or absence of critical higher liberal education given to its leaders (pp. 99-105). These themes bedevil the struggles for the improvement of higher education in Québec, in which Montpetit will take a leading role after his return to Montréal in 1910.

<sup>22</sup> Robidoux, op. cit.: 250.

<sup>23</sup> Rodolphe Salis’s *Chat noir* cabaret was the subject of an exhibition, presented in 1992 by the Musée d’Orsay, for which the accompanying catalogue provides an introduction to the milieu of both cabaret and its revue (Mariel Oberthür, *Le Chat Noir 1881-1897*. Paris, Musée d’Orsay [Les dossiers du Musée d’Orsay], 1992). A similar exhibition, based on the collection of Sarah and Armond Fields and focusing on the achievements in printmaking of the *Chat Noir* artists, was presented at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in 1993 (*Le Chat Noir, A Montmartre Cabaret and its Artists in turn-of-the-century Montmartre*). The literary and ideological eclecticism of Salis’s journal is neatly summed up by M. Oberthür: “Salis ne prendra jamais position. Il accueille. *Le Chat Noir* est un tremplin qui reflète l’ensemble des courants qui agitent les milieux littéraires sans toutefois en privilégier aucun, à mi-chemin entre le naturalisme, le symbolisme, les tendances philosophiques du matérialisme, du catholicisme. Le grand mérite de Salis est d’avoir favorisé une littérature à multiples facettes, indéfinissables, mêlées de facéties et d’humour” (31).

réactionnaire, tous les genres, sauf, à mon sens, le genre ennuyeux . [...]”<sup>24</sup> Born in the aftermath of the long-awaited abrogation of censorship laws by France’s Third Republic government in 1881, the *Chat Noir* enjoyed a relative longevity which made it a constant point of reference for a generation of Québec intellectuals, writers, and artists. The eclecticism which it championed operated across the limits and conventions of French social mores as these pertained to everything from social intercourse to the ideological representation of French history. At a time when France was rebuilding the representation of its history through the secularisation of its schools, and paradoxically relinquishing control through the acceptance of freedom of expression – which instantly gave rise to a ferocious polemical press straddling a wide range of republican, monarchist, secular and ultramontane views of society – the *Chat Noir* offered a joyous confusion of every world-view in which provocation far outranked decorum. To a young Québec generation witness to the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century *rouge-ultramontaine* battles over freedom of education, religious belief, historical identity and cultural expression, it may well have offered additional layers, for it was a hybrid institution: “Au *Chat Noir*, l’humour saxon, froid et macabre, apporté par les Américains, s’alliera chez les poètes et les artistes à la bonne humeur française, à ses jeux de mots et d’esprit, et à ses calembours.”<sup>25</sup> Named by Salis after the Black Cat of Edgar Allan Poe, so beloved to his translator Charles Baudelaire, the *Chat Noir* is also home to the first translators of Mark Twain.<sup>26</sup> This meeting point between affinities to France and the U.S. takes on a resonance for a population which

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<sup>24</sup> Maurice Donnay, *Autour du Chat Noir* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1926): 46, reprinted in M. Oberthür, op. cit., : 52.

<sup>25</sup> Oberthür, op.cit.: 30.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

already has a diaspora in the U.S. – Asselin among their number. The intra-American transferences are rich, of course, as both French- and English- Canadian audiences adopt the craze of blackface minstrelsy and respond to Henri Julien's *By-Town Coons* as mementoes of countless performances on indoor and outdoor stages in Canadian locales that are part of the American performance circuits.

When the young Robert LaPalme met Albéric Bourgeois, “fortement influencé par l'esprit Quat'Z'Arts de la belle époque du *Chat Noir*,”<sup>27</sup> Bourgeois had found a way to blend variety with stability. On page and on stage, he established a serial form which paradoxically permitted a (potentially) endless revisiting of seams of satire that gained in self-reflexive impact through their very accrual – a process evoked by the title Bourgeois gave to both his Saturday illustrated column “by the Père Ladébauche”, and to his cabaret revue: *En roulant ma boule*. It was enough for Léon Robidoux to claim in 1978,

Cinquante ans après les représentations d' *En roulant ma boule*, on est étonné de constater jusqu'à quel point cette revue musicale est restée actuelle, en ce qu'elle est déjà une critique acerbe de nos conditionnements [...] de notre joyeuse schizophrénie[...] de l'utilisation que nous faisons toujours du folklore, celui-là même que nous redécouvrons depuis quelques années.<sup>28</sup>

Effectively, *En roulant ma boule* was a close precursor to Gratien Gélinas's *Fridolinons* revues which ran between 1937 and 1946. Fridolin and Bourgeois's perennial Père Ladébauche, like the Baptiste and Catherine figures who staffed the majority of his social comment caricatures, were a long-running foils to the seriousness of the world. They

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<sup>27</sup> Robert LaPalme, “Mon' Bourgeois”, in Robidoux, op. cit.:17.

<sup>28</sup> Robidoux, op. cit.: 247.

were always figures “of the people” who acted as spokespersons for common-sense questioning of the fashions and political movements at home and abroad. Gélinas presented Fridolin as a Gavroche figure, forever slinging shots at the great Goliath-like verities of the time. He is another of the inheritors of the famed and doomed little boy of the barricades in Victor Hugo's 1830 Paris of *Les Misérables*. A fellow inheritor of the mantle had been none other than Henri Julien, memorialised by Gonzalve Desaulniers in 1908 as a “Gavroche de l'art.”<sup>29</sup> We have come full circle to the question of identity which presents possibilities for both caricature and archetype - in a sense by developing an oxymoron, an archetypal caricature. Important for us is the indication of a long-settled and accepted rôle for the caricaturist who was indeed part of a parallel tradition throughout cultural life. In this respect, the model of the *Chat Noir* was significant at several other levels: the stage, like the newspaper, was a constantly-reinvented setting to which the author-performer-artist convened a loyal audience.

### **2.3. Montréal caricature and French Catholic polemical journalism: the ghost of**

#### **Léon Bloy**

The same was true of Olivar Asselin, and the generation of writers (Jules Fournier, Louis Francoeur, Victor Barbeau and Charles-Henri Grignon) so beholden to the examples of the polemical life of letters literary institutions and networks that made up and were sustained by French society. They represented the rollicking, pamphleteering, often uncomfortable and reviled tradition of critical journalism in Québec – in many respects the closest to the spirit of satirical printmaking that Québec enjoyed after 1960. As

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<sup>29</sup> Gonzalve Desaulniers, “Henri Julien”, in *Album Julien* (Montréal : Beauchemin, 1917) : 10.

Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon writes of Asselin and Fournier:

Les deux pamphlétaires, Asselin surtout, se sont retrouvés dans les accents imprécateurs et le style somptueux d'un Léon Bloy. D'abord, comme eux, journaliste de combat au *Gil Blas* et au *Chat noir*, l'écrivain périgourdin aux métaphores de visionnaire connaît, en France, une existence de misère et d'isolement indescriptible. Cette situation semble délibérément entretenue par une sorte de volonté farouche de la part du pamphlétaire de s'en prendre à toutes les écoles de pensée et à la plupart des institutions en place.<sup>30</sup>

Most importantly for the climate that Asselin would foster in the 1930s when he hired LaPalme, his great hero Léon Bloy (1846-1917) was directly involved with the very world alluded to by LaPalme in his memoir of Bourgeois at the *Matou Botté*. It is just this *religieux mystique* and *réactionnaire* Bloy whom Asselin's friend Claude-Henri Grignon celebrated in a biographical essay printed in the 1925 *Soirées de l'École littéraire de Montréal*. It clearly identified Bloy's beginnings in journalism at the *Chat Noir*, where Bloy was a pamphleteer "qui vociférait, hurlait, frappait à droite et à gauche."<sup>31</sup>

This ironic-critical world prevailed in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Montréal. Henri Julien's depictions of the cabinet ministers of Wilfrid Laurier's government as blackface minstrels in his 1899 series *The Songs of the By-Town Coons* existed in the

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<sup>30</sup> Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, op.cit. : 616. Pelletier-Baillargeon establishes a link to Asselin's love for the poor in his own Catholicism, and to the renewal of Catholicism beyond the structure of Pope and Church in France under Bergson and Péguy - a feature that will also surface in the monarchist Charles Maurras. On right and left these are some of the bases for a social engagement that, in other circumstances, transforms American caricature in the same years. The roots of both strong left and right leanings from identical sources is remarkable, as Maurras, along with Maurice Barrès, will come to have a marked impact on the thought of Lionel Groulx.

<sup>31</sup> Valdombre (Claude-Henri Grignon, pseud.), "Léon Bloy", in *Les Soirées de l'École littéraire de Montréal* (Montréal: s.n., 1925): 49-82. A further exploration of the importance of the lineage stretching beyond Bloy to Charles Baudelaire as a supreme example of a Catholic literature so engaged with a devotion to God that it will delve into all the fallen states of human existence symbolised by "les charognes" is discussed below, n. 70.

same world as the burlesque show and the satiric sketch of stage and later radio. This world was polemical and it was to be found, albeit sometimes fleetingly, in broadsides, in daily newspapers and pamphlets, and in the more traditional publications of novels and essays. Asselin, Fournier, Bourgeois, Barbeau, Valdombre and LaPalme were all at home in this restless world. Theatrical representations of burlesque, and vaudeville were legion. This popular culture concocted a heady hybridity of forms in emerging Montréal theatre and leisure spaces.<sup>32</sup> They seldom registered in the vision of a Roy or Groulx. Theatre was largely disapproved of by the clergy, although as with any fine ambiguous situation it clearly had a strong history in Québec cultural history, one in which the Church could be a driving force.<sup>33</sup> Popular theatre, however, went after the very sanctity of language that Roy and Rivard were so keen to have incarnated in the rural French they so carefully preserved and encouraged. The economist and essayist Victor Barbeau (1896-1994), just

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<sup>32</sup> Chantal Hébert has devoted two volumes to the subject : *Le burlesque au Québec : un divertissement populaire* (1981) and *Le burlesque québécois et américain. Textes inédits* (Ste.-Foy, Presses de l'Université Laval/CRELIQ, 1989). The latter proposes a thematic methodology which resembles Raymond Morris's approach to caricature (Morris, 1992). Donald Cuccioletta devoted a PhD dissertation to «The Americanness of Québec urban popular culture as seen through burlesque theater in Montreal (1919-1939) (UQAM, 1997).

<sup>33</sup> One of the most useful surveys of the question is the Archives des lettres canadiennes's volume devoted to *Le théâtre canadien-français* (Montréal, Fides, 1976). In «Vers une tradition théâtrale», Jacques Cotnam reminds us that : «Avec Jean Hamelin [*Renouveau du théâtre au Canada français*, 1961], il convient de dater autour des années quarante le renouveau du théâtre au Canada français, la fondation des Compagnons de Saint-Laurent, en 1937, (et les débuts de Fridolin [LaPalme's friend Gratien Gélinas] la même année), servant de point de repère. Renaissance qui, ainsi que le souligne fort à propos l'historien du théâtre canadien-français contemporain, s'effectue 'par la voie rassurante de la foi, autant que par celle plus suspecte de l'art'. Le théâtre *chrétien*, toutefois, ne tardera pas à céder devant le théâtre *profane* : disons plutôt, pour éviter toute ambiguïté, que les Compagnons ne tarderont pas à s'intéresser au théâtre tout court, «à condition qu'il soit un théâtre d'art bien en santé» (343). Assuredly, in his introduction, Guy Beaulne reminds us that «On sait par contre combien nôtre théâtre eut à lutter contre les mandements extrêmement sévères des évêques de Montréal et de Québec. Ceux-ci s'attaquaient évidemment aux troupes françaises et américaines qui apportaient dans une nation jeune, pauvre, sous-éduquée et nourrie d'une morale exigeante et puritaine des idées et des préoccupations nouvelles et prématurées en même temps qu'une amoralité pernicieuse et répréhensible». However, there is a surprisingly huge corpus of works written in French in Canada, with a stunning historical relevance in the theatre of our fathers (12-13). Elsewhere, Gratien Gélinas's own theatrical origins can be found in his student days at the Collège de Montréal; see Gratien Gélinas et Victor-Lévy Beaulieu, *Gratien, Tit-Coq, Fridolin, Bousille et les autres* (Montréal: Stanké,



as staunch a defender of the French language for the aims of literature as Asselin, recalled these popular transformations on language in a 1958 memoir.

Les premières licences de langage à la scène remontent aux revues si en vogue avant et après la guerre de 1914. Et encore, pour leur faire passer la rampe, les réserve-t-on à un seul personnage, le jocrisse de la pièce, tous les autres faisant contraste par leur discours. L'exception devint pourtant la règle sur les scènes de faubourg. Déformer le langage, le disloquer, en faire une pâte, ajouter à sa salacité, le scander de jurons (bien monotones dans leur succession) devint un métier où excellèrent, entre plusieurs, Pizzy Whizzy, Macaroni, Tizoune dont l'héritage spirituel a fait depuis la fortune littéraire et la gloire matérielle de Gratien Gélinas.<sup>34</sup>

The “sole personnage,” the key figure, emerged thus in the same era as Bourgeois' own recreation of Berthelot's Ladébauche. Ladébauche, Baptiste and Catherine were effectively, like Chaplin's Little Tramp, the recurring “jocrisse de la pièce,” recurring in contrapuntal positions to represent the public within the realm of farce, caricature, parody. Indeed Gélinas's own Fridolin inherited the structure of this position. Unsurprisingly, Gélinas and LaPalme formed a close alliance in the 1940s, as we shall see in the chapter 4, when LaPalme was busy transforming Maurice Duplessis himself into just such a “jocrisse de la pièce.”

Like Hugh Graham for Julien before him, Asselin wielded the powerful commissioning role and provided an almost subterranean link to the liberties of expression enshrined in France's generations of writers whose testing of the limits of literature, from Baudelaire to the symbolists, would condition the liberty enjoyed by LaPalme. Although only involved in LaPalme's career for some two years near the end of his own life, Asselin, as

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1993): 19, 129.

<sup>34</sup> Victor Barbeau, “La danse autour de l'érable”, *Cahiers de l'Académie canadienne-française* (Montréal, 1958): 7-43, reprinted in Marcotte, op cit.: 389. Among the names listed by Barbeau is that of Henri Letondal, a victim along with Roy, Groulx, Asselin and others of the literary parody written by Louis

we shall see, represented the confluence of pamphleteering, satire, parody and caricature through the values he attached to the responsibility taken by the Catholic writer. But it is also important to see in the earlier stages those occasions on which he took pains to associate himself to the value of caricature.

In the battle of cultural imperatives that thrived in the 1900-1910 period, loosely labelled as the battle between the *regionalistes* and the *exotiques* exemplified by the journal *Le Nigog* (1918), Asselin on the whole greatly preferred the latter; his adherence was to contemporary French culture, and for this reason he joined the War effort in 1916.<sup>35</sup>

Asselin's France was that of the ideal sought by the *exotiques* faction, that strand which followed on from the earliest version of the École littéraire de Montréal. Its embattled resistance to the deprecations of regionalist adversaries was ripe for polemical satire.

Thus in his preface to Guy Delahaye's 1912 avant-garde collection, *Mignonne, allons voir si la rose...*, Asselin characterised the work as

[...] délibérément provocatrice, funambulesque à la troisième puissance, mais plus intéressante, par son allure même, que ces beaux petits recueils bien peignés, bien léchés, bien sages, qui forment presque toute la production poétique canadienne-française.<sup>36</sup>

More importantly, Asselin organized his preface around his appreciation of *la Blague* of which he claimed to be a disciple. Humour was the very element so essential to

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Francoeur and Philippe Panneton. See note 40 below.

<sup>35</sup> Olivar Asselin, «Pourquoi je m'enrole», in *Liberté de pensée* (Montréal : Typo Essais, 1997). This is the text of a speech given at the Monument national in January 1916.

<sup>36</sup> Pelletier-Baillargeon, op. cit.: 574. The author comments : «En parodiant les vers d'inspiration «terroiriste» de son rival [Englebert Gallèze, who had bested Lahaise for a spot in the École littéraire de Montréal's membership in 1909] Lahaise ne manque pas d'écorcher au passage Albert Ferland [...] et l'abbé Camille Roy.» The *terroiristes'* rivals are demarcating their positions.

caricature that LaPalme would recognize as his first professional objective. It had a profoundly human importance. Significantly, Asselin also wondered “Si, n’était l’amitié personnelle qui nous lie, il ne serait pas tenté de me compter parmi les cochons que, sans comme Léon Bloy les nommer par leur nom, il invite aujourd’hui à aller voir avec Mignonne ‘si la rose est sans épines.’”<sup>37</sup> As for the writing fostered by the generation of Delahaye, we find caricature actually named by another writer who was directly involved in the anti-terroiriste publication *Le Nigog* (1918). In his *Psyché au cinéma* (1916), Marcel Dugas associated caricature to a positive value of liberation, in which the being-excessive was crucial to health and is, as with Camille Roy in 1905, associated to childhood : but now as childhood's companion and as a marker of the tragic nature of childhood doomed to pass away. In *C’était un p’tit garçon*, dedicated to a “chasseur d’images”, we read of a little boy who “pissed vinegar and played violin on a pig's tail”: “Ayant appris à lire, il passait ses jours dans M. Rabier, M. Forain, Caran D’Ache, et les autres. C’est vers eux qu’il allait instinctivement – les caricaturistes, et les dessinateurs gais [...] il était partout et nulle part, dans le passé ou l’avenir.”<sup>38</sup> This symbolist dream of dissolution was made possible in the caricaturist's line. “Sois cohérent, sois incohérent! Et pour taquiner ta nature, offre-toi, en imagination, la comédie de la perversité intégrale!”<sup>39</sup> The reference to *cohérence* and *incohérence* appears to refer to the *Incohérents* of 1880s Paris, in the milieu that included the *hydropathes* and the

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<sup>37</sup> Cited in Pelletier-Baillargeon, op. cit.: 616.

<sup>38</sup> Cited in Marcotte, op. cit.: 201-202. Rabier, Jules Forain and Caran d’Ache were key caricaturists in the Third Republic. One of the clearest introductions to their work in its wider context will be found in Jacques Lethève, *La caricature sous la IIIe république* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1986).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. The *Catalogue illustré de l'exposition des arts incohérents* (Paris: Bernard, 1884) was collected on publication by former Québec premier Joseph-Adolphe Chapleau in 1884. It now figures in the special collections division of the Bibliothèque des sciences humaines of the Université de Montréal.

denizens of the *Chat Noir* cabaret. This brings the patterns of emulation full circle since the *Chat noir* had for four years been home to the “Propos d’un entrepreneur de démolitions”, the savage reputation-destroying satires of Léon Bloy.

We are far from Camille Roy's vision of a healthy state of affairs. In his *Manuel d'histoire de la littérature canadienne-française* of 1918, published thus in the same year as *Le Nigog*, Roy praised the work of the poet Blanche Lamontagne for its place in a healthy literature based on healthy ideas, marked by a laborious (and thus meritorious) approach. Roy criticized symbolist excesses, associating their vagueness with not only unhealthiness but outright impiety.<sup>40</sup> More polemical still was Claude-Henri Grignon who re-labelled *Le Nigog* as *Le Nigaud*, peopled by decadents, symbolists “qui s'acharnent [...] à changer le sens et le rapport des mots”; one by one he enumerated the offenders, such as Guy Delahaye “qui va s'épuisant dans l'énormité de son oeuvre insignifiante.”<sup>41</sup>

It was perhaps inevitable that the volley of insults and quarrels should afford sufficient materials for the 1924 *Littératures à la manière de...* by Louis Francoeur and Philippe Panneton (who, in 1937 under the name Ringuet, published one of the most important (and last) of the *terroir* novels, *Trente arpents*). Francoeur and Panneton offered merciless satires of Henri Bourassa, Camille Roy, Lionel Groulx, *La Presse*, Valdombre

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<sup>40</sup> This broad summary of Roy's project is founded in a reading of Marie-Andrée Beaudet, op. cit.: 133, in a chapter devoted to the avant-garde and regionalism.

<sup>41</sup> See Robert Lahaise, *Une Histoire du Québec par sa littérature, 1914-1939* (Montréal, Guérin, 1998): 350 and n. 209. As Valdombre, Grignon inaugurated a pamphleteering tradition of his own in which his chief enemy was Victor Barbeau, whom we earlier witnessed remembering the role of the lone figure on stage in the development of the theatre monologue. Barbeau replied laconically in his *Cahiers de Turc*,

(the aforementioned Claude-Henri Grignon), the monologist Henri Letondal, and others. The parody of Valdombre was entitled 'Un porc: Léon Bloy'. Valdombre's disapproval of *Le Nigog* and of the efforts of Edouard Montpetit and Victor Barbeau was re-expressed, in the most characteristically excessive *Bloyen* language, replete with vomit, spit, decay, stillbirth, death:

[...] je me crois en droit de parler sans fausse rhétorique de l'être le plus putride qu'un Pégase en rut ai jamais vomi sur le plancher croulant des lettres françaises. [...] Je n'écris ni pour les imbéciles, ni pour les gens intelligents. J'abandonne avec joie les sous-Barbeau et les sous-Montpetit à leurs appétits de conférences littéraires et de pâtisserie française. Je m'adresse à moi seul, c'est-à-dire à personne. Qu'on se le tienne pour dit. [...] je trouve belle l'attitude de Celui qui s'érige, dans le Désert, en dépuratif de la Langue canadienne outragée.

Quand on a clamé une fois de telles vérités, il ne reste plus qu'à gravir le calvaire – quel calvaire!- formé de l'amoncellement des calomnies, des crachats et des cadavres morts-nés des Nigoguistes d'autrefois. [...] il n'est personne, je crois, à part, bien entendu, les suaves monomanes de la Clarté, et après le très indulgent exposé qui précède, qui ne conclue à l'assimilation parfaite de Léon Bloy avec le dernier porcine de la plus lamentable race.<sup>42</sup>

Valdombre's (un-parodic) detailed sketch of the life and importance of Léon Bloy appeared one year later, in the 30th anniversary volume of *Les soirées de l'École littéraire de Montréal*.<sup>43</sup>

In 1931, Germain Beaulieu of the revived École littéraire de Montréal poked fun at the École's own efforts by publishing at Éditions Albert Levesque a slender volume of literary parodies, illustrated with caricatures by Albéric Bourgeois, entitled *Nos*

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January 1922 : "tout cela est cocasse, passablement burlesque, tout cela fait rire".

<sup>42</sup> "Un porc: Léon Bloy." in Philippe Panneton (Ringuelet) and Louis Francoeur, *Littératures... à la manière de....*, (Montréal, Edouard Garand éditeur, 1924).

<sup>43</sup> *Les Soirées de l'École littéraire de Montréal : proses et vers / par Englebert Gallèze, Valdombre, J.-A. Lapointe, Albert Laberge, Albert Ferland, Albert Dreux, Germain Beaulieu, Damase Potvin, Ubald Paquin, Louis-Joseph Doucet, Alphonse Beaugard, Jules Tremblay, G.A. Dumont, W.-A. Baker, Albert*

*Immortels*. The targets included Beaulieu himself and his contemporaries at the École, all of whom had been anthologized in *Les soirées de l'École littéraire de Montréal*. Claude-Henri Grignon reviewed Beaulieu's caricatures in a text reprinted in his own *Ombres et clameurs. Regards sur la littérature canadienne* of 1934. Grignon gives us a pessimistic reminder of the state of criticism :

Ces fameuses lettres canadiennes, on les a bien mêlées depuis une dizaine d'années. Des critiques distingués, autorisés, mielleux, emmiellants, parfois frondeurs, chatouilleux, envieux, dogmatiques, enténébrés, invertébrés et ignorants ont écrit sur les livres de chez nous des choses inouïes, ridicules, professorales et encombrantes. M. Beaulieu, au contraire de ces pontifes, ne pose pas au critique: mais son livre est peut-être jusqu'à présent la meilleur analyse qui ait encore paru sur les oeuvres des littérateurs canadiens [...]<sup>44</sup>

The self-reflexivity of Québec culture was on the increase.

### **3. Reception: Robert LaPalme's first published works (1932-1935) and the development of a critical vocabulary for caricature**

#### **3.1. First reactions: Reynald and Jean-Marie Gélinas**

"Reynald," the art critic for *La Presse*, first afforded a trace of Robert LaPalme in the public realm in November 1932. This trace came in a small item that called Reynald's readers' attention to an exhibition being held at the Bibliothèque Saint-Sulpice as part of the "Semaine du Livre et de l'Art canadiens."<sup>45</sup> Alongside examples of achievement in

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*Boisjoly*. (Montréal : n.p. 1925).

<sup>44</sup> Claude-Henri Grignon, "Germain Beaulieu", in *Ombres et clameurs* (Montréal, Éditions Albert Lévesque, 1934): 148-149.

<sup>45</sup> Reynald, "Les expositions d'art. Oeuvres d'artistes canadiens-français". *La Presse*, 7 November 1932, p.

book design and binding in Québec, principally by the Beauchemin, Granger and Albert Lévesque publishing houses, several leading artists (several of whom were closely associated with these publishers) had been invited to exhibit works. This portrait of the emerging glories of the book arts milieu in Québec echoed a similar emphasis on the book as a marker of not only literary but also artistic modernity and accomplishment in France.<sup>46</sup> Altogether, wrote Reynald, this was an opportunity to discover “une collection bien représentative des œuvres de chez nous.” In *La Patrie*, Jean-Marie Gélinas noted the range of artists invited to exhibit, and offered comments on the subjects and approaches. Rodolphe Duguay had presented a portrait of Nérée Beauchemin and several “marines minuscules” and Alice Nolin, a portrait of Charles Gill engraved on metal. A work by Marc-Aurèle Fortin “ressemble moins que ses autres œuvres à une image d’Épinal” and had a “caractère remarquable de poésie vespérale.” Gélinas’s comments alerted the reader to the decorum of genres and visual régimes that should prevail in discerning achievement in contemporary culture, and interestingly signalled the confusion between literary and visual terms.<sup>47</sup> While Gélinas mentioned without elaboration that drawings by Bourgeois and LaPalme were present, Reynald noted that these two artists were caricaturists, working indeed within a realm where word and picture – the literary and the visual – were necessarily present to one another. Reynald first of all tipped his hat to his celebrated colleague from *La Presse*, Albéric Bourgeois, who exhibited “quelques unes de ses caricatures bien connues et bien personnelles qui expriment surtout les attitudes les

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<sup>46</sup> For the thriving publishing milieu of Montréal, see below, section 3.2 and the discussion of LaPalme’s work with wartime publishers in Chapter Four.

<sup>47</sup> Jean-Marie Gélinas, “À l’exposition de la semaine des arts canadiens.” *La Patrie*, 7 November 1932, p. 2. The full list comprised Rodolphe Duguay, Alice Nolin, Adrien Hébert, Marc-Aurèle Fortin, Elzear Soucy, Alyne Gauthier Charlebois, Georges Delfosse, Jean Palardy, Ivan Jobin, Jean-Paul Lemieux, Maurice

plus caractéristiques du type populaire qu'il a créé, ce Ladébauche désormais célèbre.”<sup>48</sup>

This popular type, both a beloved figure but representative too of some wider system of references and values, was exhibited in the company of Robert LaPalme “qui y va d’une plaisante caricature de Jovette Bernier (Figure 2-3) et d’un groupe de ces têtes géométriques dont il a trouvé le secret original.” The *têtes géométriques* were writers, thinkers, broadcasters, publishers, politicians. They were figureheads, and also celebrities whose very countenance, no less than the work for which they were well-known, had to be re-created convincingly in any caricature. The very term *géométrique* encapsulated the work (and project) of LaPalme in these years: to convey by a minimum of means – in this case through the use of limited geometrical shapes, adroitly placed – as complex as possible a set of associations to the person represented. As we shall see, the complexity of these associations devolved repeatedly, back and forth, between his subject and LaPalme’s chosen stylistic means, establishing the fact of his representation itself as an example of the very leadership it portrayed – and leaving open the question of affiliation of his artistic practice to the many positions being staked out in this decade.

### 3.2. Éditions Albert Lévesque

The implications of this were evident as early as 1932, the year of LaPalme’s emergence in both book and periodical publication in Québec. His “pleasant caricature” of Jovette Bernier alludes to his illustrations for her book of poems - remarkable in inter-war Québec for their capacity to deal openly with the fallen state between physical and sacred

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LeBel, Emile Vézina and Octave Bélanger.



love – entitled *Les masques déchirés* (Figure 2-4). LaPalme's drawings, although no more than section headings, conjure up a late, reduced sense of *fin-de-siècle* decadence.<sup>49</sup> The book was published by Éditions Albert Lévesque, whose eponymous owner had acquired the Librairie de l'Action française in 1926, renaming it Librarie de l'Action canadienne-française before electing eponymity in 1930. The Action française imprint had been launched in 1919 by the society of same name founded by Lionel Groulx, who was its director from 1920 to 1927.<sup>50</sup> Lévesque's publication lists in the late 1920s and 1930s attest to what had become a widening divergence in ideological and artistic aims, showing at any rate to what extent the purposes of modernity enjoyed heated debate.

Beyond devoting himself to publishing the best of Québec's literary and intellectual élite, Lévesque was also responsible for the annual publication of the *Almanach de la langue française*. Coinciding with the book arts exhibition which Levesque co-organised, the 1932 edition of the *Almanach* carried LaPalme's drawings for the first time and thus was bound to represent a watershed, ushering him into the realm of Québec journalistic comment, as is borne out by two small pieces in Olivar Asselin's *Le Canada* early in 1933 which list just who LaPalme is able to bring to life in his drawings.<sup>51</sup> These drawings were appreciated both for their "secret original" and because they were a means of representing types just as important as those which are part of *identitaire*

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<sup>48</sup> Reynald, op. cit.

<sup>49</sup> Jovette Bernier, *Les masques déchirés. Illustré par Robert LaPalme* (Montréal: Éditions Albert Lévesque, 1932).

<sup>50</sup> The story of Lévesque's acquisition of the Action française imprint and lists is recounted in Jacques Michon, "Albert Lévesque, entre 'individualistes' et nationalistes", in Jacques Michon, ed., *L'édition littéraire en quête d'autonomie. Albert Lévesque et son temps* (Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1994): 101-114.

<sup>51</sup> A.V., "Les choses du temps", undated clipping inscribed *Le Canada*, in LaPalme press clippings

considerations of Québec's population, like Bourgeois's *Ladébauche*. LaPalme represented Québec's political, literary and artistic leadership and as such gave his society an image of itself as productive of just such leaders.

### 3.3. LaPalme's leadership recognized

LaPalme was quickly seen as a leader himself. Again in Asselin's *Le Canada*, Henri Girard, who would play so important a role throughout the decade in the development of a criticism of modernity for Québec,<sup>52</sup> gave the first critical appraisal of LaPalme, in a despairing review of the fiftieth annual Salon du printemps at the Art Association of Montreal.

Le Salon de l'Art Association [of Montreal] apparaît logiquement comme l'antichambre du néant. Evoquez les mille souvenirs poétiques qu'une culture, fut-elle hâtive, a fait germer en votre mémoire, et pensez aussitôt au salon du printemps. Vous en concevrez en pleine lumière l'étonnante misère. De ce fatras de paysages et de natures-mortes, nous ne pouvons rien attendre. Afin que la beauté règne chez nous, il faut que nos artistes se mettent à apprendre, pour les bien exprimer, de grandes choses. Puissent les Rodolphe Duguay, les Jean Palardy, les Robert LaPalme, les André Morency, les Paul Lemieux, les André Bieler, entendre la prière fervente qu'à leur intention j'adresse aux dieux...<sup>53</sup>

In June 1933, "C.M." in *Le Bien Public* remarked on the fortuitous presence of both Lévesque and LaPalme in Montréal. The first had fulfilled a patriotic role by placing his publishing house at the service of the best "pensée canadienne" while LaPalme had acted as an innovator: "Ses figures géométriques en disent infiniment plus long, dans leur laconisme que les croutes commerciales d'un Lemay par exemple. La Palme sait voir. Il n'est pas verbeux. Ayant saisi la couleur et l'expression d'un visage, il les rend avec une

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<sup>52</sup> See Esther Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité au Québec 1919-1939* (Montréal : Éditions Nota bene, 1998), especially chapter two, 'La critique d'art moderne des années 1930 : les francophones' (67-106), and particularly the section 'Reynald à *La Presse*. Renouveau du catholicisme et ouverture à la modernité' (78-87).

<sup>53</sup> Henri Girard, "Opinions artistiques/le cinquantième salon du printemps." *Le Canada*, 13 April 1933: 2

sobrit     et une ing  niosit   de lignes qui lui seront toujours particuli  res.”<sup>54</sup>

In September of the same year appeared the first critical article to be devoted entirely to LaPalme, again in *Le Canada*. It was signed by “L.P.”, possibly Lucien Parizeau (1910-1993), a prot  g   of Asselin’s then on the *Le Canada* staff, later to become a leading publisher of illustrated books in Qu  bec. The article made several important early links. The first shows that Qu  bec critics did see LaPalme as a practitioner among others in an international context, for “L.P.” was the first to compare LaPalme’s caricatures directly to those published in *Vanity Fair* by Paolo Garretto. Qu  bec’s leaders were portrayed with a stylishness that was of a piece with that of the newspapers and magazines flowing in from Europe and particularly from the United States. The championing of French-Canadian language and accomplishments was thus seasoned with a visual identification to American celebrity portrait caricature. In the pages of the *New Yorker* and *Vanity Fair* and countless other publications, these drawings and paintings extolled the glories and stars of the New York stage, of Hollywood, of the world of journalism and books, of actual or would-be European or American royals, prime ministers, presidents and dictators (a phenomenon amply surveyed by Wendy Wick Reaves for the Library of Congress in 1997).<sup>55</sup>

Celebrity was increasingly the medium through which the representation of cultural and

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<sup>54</sup> C.M., “Albert L  vesque et Robert LaPalme dans notre ville”. [Undated clipping] *Le Bien Public* (Trois-Rivi  res), identified in manuscript as June 1933 in the LaPalme press clippings scrapbook.

<sup>55</sup> Wendy Wick Reaves, *Celebrity Caricature in America* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press/National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1998). These artists’ work is covered in Part Three, “The Vogue for Celebrity Caricature” (pp. 131-210).

political supremacy was argued and attained. The cult of Celebrity was indissociable from the machinations (both quieter and deadlier) that led individuals, alone or through organised party politics, to power in this era. The story of LaPalme's first years as a professional caricaturist is tempered with the awareness in Québec of the potential for both. Thus, if in the United States Miguel Covarrubias could align actress Jean Harlow and baseball player Babe Ruth with Italy's fascist dictator Benito Mussolini as subjects for the caricaturist's virtuoso style, so could LaPalme unfurl a ceremony of geometric heads paying tribute to bedfellows both natural and strange: R.B. Bennett, Olivar Asselin, Robert Choquette, Albert Lévesque, Lionel Groulx, Wifrid Pelletier, FDR, Adolf Hitler and Mussolini among many others were all re-configured through his distinctive caricatural geometries, a personal variant on the languages of cubism and art deco that were so playfully employed by Marus de Zayas (1880-1961), Paolo Garretto (1903-89) and Miguel Covarrubias (1902-1957), as a group of thumbnail images will show (Figure 2-5).<sup>56</sup> Playfulness jumped out of the textures of gouache and pencil, out of the simple lines, straight and curved, that built likeness and allegorical allusion in the full-colour plates rendered by the New-York based artists. LaPalme was at first restricted to black-and-white line drawings which depended above all on the latent power of line, curve and dot to achieve the textures and spaces of likeness. We will see that the potential inherent

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<sup>56</sup> LaPalme touched on his influences in a December 1934 interview with Guy Morin of the Université de Montréal student newspaper: "Au moral, le dessinateur de *L'Ordre* est artiste, en enlevant à ce mot tout ce qu'il y a de péjoratif.... Je travaille de la même façon que Daumier... je dessine entièrement mon objet, pour ne corriger qu'à la fin, par dessus la première ébauche. Ce qui, je trouve, donne beaucoup de mouvement. Henri Julien est le maître sans conteste. Après lui, personne n'a jamais pu l'égaler. Puis Paul Vézina qui, pour une raison que je ne puis imaginer n'a pas été apprécié à sa juste valeur... le terme français ne prête pas à la distinction que l'on trouve en anglais entre 'caricaturist' et 'cartoonist'. Mon ambition : égaler Garetto, le plus grand caricaturiste au monde. Un Italien émigré à Paris. Il collabore au *Vanity Fair* de New-York." Guy Morin, "Cinq minutes avec Robert LaPalme", in *Quartier Latin* (Montréal, December 6th 1934). LaPalme also discussed these influences, particularly that of Garetto, in LaPalme (1997) : 13 and passim.

to these very basic design elements was also an important issue for “L.P.”, even as it could not be separated from what was the *ethical* import in the very choice of the subject of representation. This debate lay at the heart of the dilemmas, evoked as we have seen by Henri Girard, over the proper materials for artistic exploration in 1930s Québec.

“L.P.” opened up this particular debate in the second significant link made in his article. This concerned the supremacy of style over subject which could only be otherwise found in the landscapes of Jean Palardy (1905-1991). In both case one must think of an “aptitude à railler son sujet,” to have a certain disregard and capacity for undermining what one portrays. The comparison is instructive, for although LaPalme might have a portrait-caricature bent that would distinguish his work in intent from Palardy, neither has he yet reached a purpose of social or political satire. Nonetheless, “L.P.” noted that beyond his understanding of his craft, LaPalme (and Palardy, by implication) had a “sens du grotesque, particulier au critique, et le sens du relief, propre au peintre de paysages.” The conflation of caricature and landscape offers tantalising echoes to the common sources of both, whether more recently to LaPalme and Palardy in terms of regionalist, *terroir* painting, or to the satiric tradition of political landscape that stretches back to the early Renaissance. The importance of *relief* to both indicates that caricaturist and landscape artist must have a sense of form, of space.

By attending to the means through which artists demonstrate their understanding of nature, regardless of their individual practices, “L.P.” afforded a context to the other seam which runs throughout the article. He distinguishes between straight and curved

lines, as though the latter stood in ethical opposition to the stultification ascribed to the former. At first reading, this preoccupation may seem overblown. Yet in reading through the arguments presented, the longstanding tradition of assigning critical or moral weight to the varying uses of line in Western art can be seen to reassert itself. The straight line is here closely allied to perspective and to the sense of regulations, containment and stasis; whereas the curve is associated to dramatic effects, to the 'liveliness' sought for in art. Certainly "L.P." was aware of the need for exaggeration, for the grotesque and for the critical, and indeed concluded with an appeal that would become resonant for LaPalme: "Comment l'art pourrait-il admettre l'exagération, si ce n'est dans les genres spéciaux, menteurs mais non pas inutiles, de la caricature, du dessin publicitaire et de la décoration murale!"<sup>57</sup>

When, by October 1933, the references to LaPalme were multiplying and his value as an emblem of innovation became ever more explicit, the language required to assess his work was also evolving. The uncertain tagging of artistic movements and the confident identification of caricature in itself as an example of the expression of French *génie* – regardless of any stylistic kinship to the American-based Garretto and Covarrubias (respectively expatriate Italian and Mexican artists) rapidly inform the *discours*. Caricature became the means through which the critical vocabulary of modernism could be rehearsed, perhaps at a stage before it had become rigorously codified. A sense of caricature's power also percolates through the critical assessments of its capacity to break decorum. Representation might have its victims, after all. The shifting boundaries of acceptable victimisation were allied to the purposes of caricature and, as we shall see

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<sup>57</sup> "L.P.", "Les caricatures de LaPalme". *Le Canada*, September 1933.

later, to its cultural sources and kindred forms of expression in Québec society.

*La Patrie* announced LaPalme's arrival to its pages in its relaunch as a lively and progressive paper with every type of entertainment, sporting and women's content; this tenure was short-lived.<sup>58</sup> Ottawa's *Le Droit* reviewed the 1933 edition of the *Almanach de la langue française*, with its newest "défigurés" by LaPalme, attesting that the drawings have "du cubisme, avec un touche de Dadaïsme. De ces formules extravagantes, l'artiste se fait une manière vivante et pittoresque."<sup>59</sup> The "défiguré" is a troubling yet productive challenge throughout the first critical reactions to LaPalme. A depiction of émigré French historian Robert Rumilly was published in *Le Petit Journal* in November 1933, along with what reads as a disclaimer: "Pour quiconque connaît M. Rumilly, la vignette ci-dessus est frappante, *malgré la charge nécessaire à la caricature* (emphasis added) (Figure 2-6)." On the one hand reminiscent of the distaste for *la charge* which was ascribed to Henri Julien by Albéric Bourgeois, this statement is also redolent of a certain guilty pleasure. Perhaps this needs to be borne in mind as Robert Rumilly, writing in *le Petit Journal*, further comment that "nous ne serions pas de race française si nous ne goûtions l'art de la caricature; les belles promesses représentées par le talent de

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<sup>58</sup> As part of its exhortation to readers present and future ("Suivez La Patrie", *La Patrie*, 7 October 1933: 1), the newspaper asserted that each daily edition would contain original caricatures, "galeries de dessins comiques, l'illustration de faits curieux, leçons de Bridge par un expert canadien-français, la consultation docteur de la "Patrie", "une réponse à tout par Louise : chroniques féminines, le Royaume des femmes, le Paradis des enfants; Les contes de la "Patrie", le feuilleton de la "Patrie"; chronique sportive, chronique financière; Timothée, l'incomparable Timothée dont les chants joyeux sont radiodiffusés par le poste CHLP de la "Patrie" et dont les programmes détaillés se trouvent dans son organe officiel. [...] Il suffit de lire quelquefois ce journal vivant et progressiste pour ne plus pouvoir s'en passer."

<sup>59</sup> "L'almanach de la langue française." *Le Droit*, 15 October 1933.



l'un des nôtres méritent de nous réjouir, d'être applaudies et encouragées." <sup>60</sup> The mild ambiguity audible in these statements is echoed by Rumilly himself in a small note on LaPalme's promise: "Comme on dit dans notre province, il ira loin si les petits cochons ne le mangent pas." <sup>61</sup> Overall, it seems as if being properly French in spirit in Québec requires a sisyphian blend of mitigation and apology - and yet, resolve.

### 3.4. The first exhibition at the Théâtre Stella, December 1933

LaPalme may certainly be said to have exemplified an entrepreneurial spirit, French or otherwise, in securing an exhibition of his works in the foyer of the Théâtre Stella (ancestor of the Théâtre du Rideau Vert) in December 1933. We have already heard LaPalme affirm that this exhibition brought him to the attention of Olivar Asselin. This initiative attracted glowing and lengthy critical assessments from both Reynald in *La Presse* and Georges Langlois in *Le Canada*. Reynald quickly praised LaPalme's superiority to his francophone counterparts Albéric Bourgeois, Paul Leduc, Arthur Lemay; and to Arthur Racey of the *Montreal Star*. For Reynald, this exhibition rescues LaPalme from the tendency to mannerism and dadaism evident in the *Patrie* drawings; and shows him with the best of French achievement. A certain lightness of touch, a gentle disdain for rules, an irony with fixed limits as was so popular in France, seem to pervade Reynald's appreciation :

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<sup>60</sup> "Robert Rumilly vu par Robert LaPalme." *Le Petit Journal*, clipping with manuscript identification of November 1933, in LaPalme press clipping scrapbook, np.

<sup>61</sup> Rumilly would eventually be the target of LaPalme's pen during and after the Second World War. See below, Chapter Four, and LaPalme (1997): 83.

Une vingtaine de visages fixés à tout jamais dans des lignes essentielles qu'on n'oublie pas et qui suffisent à faire du jeune artiste le caricaturiste le plus original et probablement le plus essentiellement caricaturiste parmi les nôtres [...]

LaPalme sort des formules reçues, s'inspire des Français modernes, des meilleurs éléments du cubisme au besoin, et se révèle le caricaturiste par excellence des physionomies [...] n'allez pas imaginer que LaPalme ait une théorie par laquelle il applique avec rigueur des théorèmes. C'est tout simplement l'esprit de finesse qui s'exprime par l'esprit de géométrie parce que tout ce qui est forme est géométrique et que le caricaturiste observant d'après une certaine méthode définie les traits du visage sait en extraire les éléments strictement indispensables. Quand LaPalme veut bien ajouter ce que j'appellerai la "configuration" aux "défigurations" inévitables de chaque physionomie et ne s'en tient pas à des suggestions incomplètes... C'est 'tapé', décisif, d'une rare économie de moyens, mais qui demande à être bien trouvée. LaPalme sait trouver, avec un esprit 1933. On dit touché, mon vieux... et l'on n'oublie jamais ensuite.<sup>62</sup>

Reynald's concern for the *défiguré* was nonetheless evident. The same could be said for *Le Canada*'s Georges Langlois. Equally inclined to praise the exhibition, Langlois took pains to ensure that the reader would distinguish between the drawing and the subject. He appeared to be worried – perhaps ironically so – that the attack articulated by the drawing would transfer itself to his text, just as, in libel, those who disseminate a libel can be equally responsible as those who compose it. This was a matter of some relevance to *Le Canada*'s editor Olivar Asselin who had been, in the 1900s and 1910s, more than once was personally or indirectly involved in attacks, physical and verbal, on Québec political figures. The possibility of irony was latent in the very terms Langlois overtly used. He picked out caricatures of the writer Harry Bernard, of whom we could gain "l'impression d'une tête dont l'équilibre est instable (*je ne parle que du dessin*) [emphasis in the original]," and of Jean-Marie Savignac who had the "apparence compliquée d'une épure de géométrie descriptive, une gueule de gangster (*je ne parle toujours que du dessin*)."

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<sup>62</sup> Reynald, "Coin artistique. R. Lapalme [sic] caricature avec acuité". *La Presse*, 12 December 1933.

Another figure, M. Saint-André, was the personification of Technocracy, with the “regard fixe, les yeux profonds, le front mystique, la tête angulaire que nous avons vue à Brigitte Helm dans ce film, déjà vieux [it had appeared in 1926!], où elle incarnait précisément la déesse de la technocratie, *Metropolis*. (Figure2-7)” Ironical or not, Langlois attested to an understanding of the visual temper of his time by signalling this stylistic icon, emblematic of the vocabularies of graphic design prevalent throughout broadcasting and mass entertainment.

By the end of his first year in the public eye, LaPalme had successfully established his unique visual capabilities and had, as an emerging caricaturist, garnered the attention of the critical milieu of Québec culture – which correspondingly attempted to fashion a critical vocabulary for his work and, in a larger sense, for caricature. LaPalme had introduced a distinct virtuoso celebrity portrait which widened Québec’s experience of home-grown caricature, hitherto largely limited to the daily situation-based emblematic comedies devised by Bourgeois, Leduc and Lemay, and Arthur Racey. The principal initial responses to his work came from the three largest-circulation daily newspapers, *La Patrie*, *La Presse* and *Le Canada*. By the end of the following year, 1934, the contact with Olivar Asselin would prove to be most productive for LaPalme.

#### 4. Robert LaPalme and the limits of caricature in mid-1930s Québec

##### 4.1. Robert LaPalme at Olivar Asselin's *L'Ordre*

As 1933 ended, *Le Canada*'s editor Olivar Asselin – who would leave the newspaper some 2 months later to establish his weekly journal, *L'Ordre* – contributed under his own by-line a brief note in praise of LaPalme, in his review of the latest *Almanach de la langue française*. In the same issue, LaPalme's drawing of Asselin from the latest *Almanach* was also reprinted : “le plus surpris de la « gang », ce sera le défiguré de La Palme, notre directeur Olivar Asselin, présentement absent de son bureau. Ce que peut faire l'art d'un caricaturiste [sic], c'est incroyable,” read the caption. Whether Asselin would be surprised more by the drawing than the scatological misprint is open to conjecture; as is the identity of the sub-editor who organised the printing of both drawing and caption – if indeed it was not Asselin himself.

Asselin's comments bore witness to the sometimes discreet but nevertheless wide subterranean impulse to irony and parody that had a growing place in Québec polemical culture. Alighting on Albert Lévesque's “silhouettes” of the “petits classiques canadiens,” Asselin alluded to his pleasure at seeing fellow journalist Louis Francoeur so treated. He linked Francoeur, the co-author of that rare example of literary parody *Littératures à la manière de.....*, to Asselin's heroes Ernest Hello and Léon Bloy, figureheads of the French Catholic right of the Third Republic, whose deceptive and ironic shyness Francoeur was

held to share. Having conjured up three quite different writers able to upset the middling consensus of pragmatic politics in France and Québec, Asselin gave a wry hint of the limits within which every caricaturist worked :

À signaler aussi une galerie de portraits esquissés, ou plutôt indiqués, par La Palme, jeune artiste de talent qui ne fait “ressemblant” qu’à condition de “défigurer” : [...] parmi ces défigurés, beaucoup de « gloires nationales ». Il en est cependant (ne les nommons pas : l’époque n’est pas aux personnalités... désobligeantes) dont la tête, défigurée ou non, ressemblera toujours à un vase... égyptien.<sup>63</sup>

These last *points de suspension* indicate the presence of plays on words. As LaPalme brought the flavour of celebrity and personality into the Québec arena, Asselin alluded to a critique of personalism exemplified by Catholic figures from both right and left. On the right, Hello and Bloy, Barbey d’Aubrevilly, Louis Veuillot, Charles Maurras, and Maurice Barrès; on the left, Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson: all critiqued the kind of compromise that obtained between Québec’s Church and political-social establishments. By yoking *personnalité* with *désobligeance* Asselin especially signalled Léon Bloy, whose *Histoires désobligeantes* had been emblematic of a career of reactionary Catholic polemical writing. This writing was so fierce that Bloy fell afoul of both forces in French society that were otherwise, under the Third Republic, locked in antagonistic struggle : the Catholic Church and the Republican government that had systematically laicised French society since the 1880s.<sup>64</sup> Asselin never adopted the apocalyptic and diabolical strategies of Bloy, whom he nevertheless admired alongside Hello and Veuillot from his formative years in Massachusetts for their polemical

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<sup>63</sup> Olivar Asselin, “L’Almanach de la langue française.” *Le Canada*, 30 December 1933: 12.

<sup>64</sup> A discussion of the literature on Léon Bloy is presented below in Chapter Five.

ferocity, so impossible to achieve in Québec. Bloy had sought to undermine what he saw as a corrupt culture, by travestyng it to its basest level; he was the most extreme instance of a breed of polemicists deeply attractive to the combative Catholic writers of Asselin's generation and the next.<sup>65</sup>

Effectively, this alliance to the Third Republic in all its manifold internecine vitality was guaranteed by the quality of literary expression by an aesthetic primacy. In the same way, the force of Asselin's persuasion was secured by his reputation which, crucially, held its weight through the strength of his defense of the *quality* of French literary expression. The experience of stylistic and grammatical quality as the medium for the defence of language had an ethical import that will be crucial for our understanding of the place of caricature. The subtleties and felicities of the French language depended for many critics on the fulfilled potential attained in the vast palette of stylistic subterfuges and sleights-of-hand possible through French grammar, syntax and vocabulary.

The literary inheritance was manifold, drawing examples from politically divergent sources. The French literary culture of the classical era (the seventeenth century) was balanced by that of eighteenth century. An era in which irony came to the forefront of French literary expression, it was also largely reviled in the minds of many Québec conservative leaders. This divided inheritance was filtered through the equally

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<sup>65</sup> Asselin's admiration for Léon Bloy at several key stages of his career, and his meeting with Bloy in 1917, are documented in the two volumes of Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon's life of Asselin. She summarizes the influence of Bloy: and through him Barbey D'Aurevilly, Ernest Hello; see Pelletier-Baillargeon, *op. cit.* 616-617, 697. At the time of writing, Mme Pelletier-Baillargeon's third volume of the life of Asselin, covering the period 1919-1937 and likely to re-engage with the importance of Bloy for Asselin's later career, had yet to be published.

controversial cultural practices of Third Republic France, resulting in a very sensitive aesthetic end-game for Québec between 1899 and the Second World War, especially in the 1930s. French society appeared irrevocably destabilised by increasingly partisan political social and cultural positionings. With *L'Ordre*, which would last but one year before succumbing to official clerical censure, Asselin bore witness to the optimistic possibilities for Québec vis-à-vis France. From the outset *L'Ordre* was subtitled *Quotidien français de culture française et de renaissance nationale*. Unlike *Le Devoir* or the more extreme nationalist journals such as *Vivre* and *La Nation* that would follow admiringly in its wake, *L'Ordre*'s vision of nationalist renaissance was removed from the increasingly prevalent proto-fascist visions gaining currency in the writings of Lionel Groulx or, at their most extreme, in Adrien Arcand's overtly fascist *Le Goglu* and Paul Bouchard and Jean-Louis Gagnons's *La Nation*. The latter troublingly invoked a reactionary and viciously xenophobic separatist vision for Québec, in Asselin's name.

Instead, *L'Ordre* prosecuted its critique of the status quo in Québec society – the compact between the liberal-capitalist economic and political order and the restrictive influence of the Catholic clergy on matters of social conscience and, in particular, on education – by eliciting rational comment from writers like Lucien Parizeau (the future publisher), Dollard Dansereau, André Bowman and Jean-Marie Nadeau (later to be driving force behind the Liberal Party in the 1950s, and a close associate of Robert LaPalme's).<sup>66</sup> By the beginning of May 1934, *L'Ordre* presented a daily caricature at the centre columns of

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<sup>66</sup> See LaPalme (1997): 43, 125, where LaPalme discusses his friendship with Nadeau and his role in encouraging him to run for the Liberal leadership; and below, Chapter Five, where Nadeau is discussed extensively.

its front page, directly beneath the masthead, continuing a practice Asselin had overseen as long ago as his years at *Le nationaliste* (1904-1908) (Figure 2-8 and Figure 2-9). LaPalme's distinctive geometric heads, alternating with occasional situation drawings, would begin to appear in August. Until then the cartoonist's mantle was assumed by Essel, who rapidly established a parallel to the great French political caricature journals directed by Charles Philipon a century earlier. Philipon had famously portrayed the Bourgeois king Louis-Philippe as a pear. Essel characterized a French-Canadian pear-headed Everyman: in the tavern or by the radio, this figure articulated *L'Ordre's* commentary on Québec and international politics (Figure 2-10). These drawings worked closely with Asselin's editorials in helping us to understand his position. For example, Asselin had attacked the widespread occurrence in Québec of anti-Semitism, in a front-page article on March 16<sup>th</sup> which exposed the support given to these campaigns by a "canaille allemande"; in Québec, Groulx was busy spearheading an economic revival for small merchants against the backdrop of the Depression by exhorting French-Canadians to boycott Jewish businesses with the slogan "Achetez chez nous".<sup>67</sup> On May 7<sup>th</sup>, Essel pictured the dangers of xenophobic nationalism as a bewildered pear-headed French-Canadian listener desperately twirls his radio's dial, unable to escape the international calls for national-ethnic solidarity and militaristic expansionism ("Allemands aux armes! /Asie aux Japonais! /Russes! Des ports au pacifique! /Arabes! Réveillez vous! /Britanniques! Sauvons nos puits de pétrole! /Français! Tous soldats! /Italiens! Il nous

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<sup>67</sup> Lionel Groulx's anti-Semitism was trenchantly discussed by Esther Delisle in *Le traître et le juif: Lionel Groulx, Le Devoir, et le délire du nationalisme d'extrême droite dans la province de Québec 1929-1939* (Outremont: L'étincelle, 1992). After a decade of bitter polemic dialogue in Québec Gérard Bouchard examined the deep contradictions in Groulx's oeuvre in *Les deux chanoines. Contradiction et ambivalence dans la pensée de Lionel Groulx* (Montréal: Boréal, 2003). See chapter 9, "Le rapport à l'autre: ethnicisme? Racisme?" (133-148), chapter 10, "Groulx antisémite?" (149-160) and, for a presentation of the contexts for fascism in Groulx's thought, chapter 6, "Libéral et réactionnaire" (81-98).



faut des colonies!’”) (Figure 2-11).

*L'Ordre* sought to connect its readership to an international community of enlightened understanding through caricature. A polemical drawing by German artist George Grosz, showing a Christ on the cross with a gas mask, was reprinted on the front page of 28 May, attesting to Nazi Germany's preparations for airborne chemical warfare through evaluative studies its agents had carried out in Paris (Figure 2-12). On August 3<sup>rd</sup>, a cartoon by Roger Roy reprinted from the French journal *Je suis partout* burlesqued the Nazi love of uniforms as an example of show-girl transvestism. And on August 8<sup>th</sup>, a Jean Sennep drawing of Adolf Hitler presented the Führer in a renewed capacity of house-painter, having just decorated an execution wall by liquidating five former colleagues. Among these examples of leading graphic satire LaPalme took his place beginning on August 4<sup>th</sup> with a brooding head of Canadian premier R. B. Bennett (Figure 2-13). Soon LaPalme provided the weekly caricature, very occasionally varying the head portraits with situation drawings – notably another anti-Nazi image on November 16<sup>th</sup>, “En Hitlérie ou le monde inversé”, in which a Nazi widow, indistinguishable in dress from her late husband, was taken to be a man by the administrator of widow's pensions (Figure 2-14). Anxiety over totalitarianism was expressed through the same ridicule of social mores which had permeated Western caricature since the advent of the Women's rights movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the attendant anxiety over reversals of roles.

Above all, however, LaPalme's presence in *L'Ordre* was notable for the presentation of celebrity caricature. Canadian, Québec and international political and cultural notables

paraded onto the front page virtually every day through the month of August; after Bennett came Québec premier Alexandre Taschereau; secretary of state Athanase David; Adolf Hitler (Figure 2-15); Camilien Houde, mayor of Montréal (Figure 2-16); Sébastien Charlety, rector of the Académie de Paris; Franc-Nohain, literary editor of the *Echo de Paris*; Arthur Sauvé, *l'homme de la lune*; Josef Stalin (Figure 2-17); their presence on the front page might be shared one day with an article on the warmongering of Hitler, and the next with an assessment of the brilliance of Katharine Mansfield! On September 28<sup>th</sup>, the drawings acquired titles that indicated an attempt at categorization. These legends attested to domains in current affairs exemplified through personalities from home or visiting from abroad, making a mark on Québec life. Thus was built a gallery of homegrown or adoptive “Gloires nationales”: Lionel Groulx for history (Figure 2-18), Edouard Montpetit for economic sciences (Figure 2-19), Jacques Maritain for Thomism (Figure 2-20), Alfred Laliberté for sculpture (Figure 2-21), Olivar Asselin himself for journalism (Figure 22), Edmond Turcotte (Asselin’s successor at *Le Canada*) for “la presse ‘démocrate’ ” (Figure 2-23) and Robert Choquette for “Le Romantisme” (Figure 2-24), among others.

Only one figure throughout this period was not drawn by LaPalme: the portrayal of Charles Maillard, the director of the École des beaux-arts (appropriately titled “Les Beaux-Arts”)<sup>68</sup> given by René Chicoine, who took over from LaPalme as of November 17<sup>th</sup> with a drawing of Georges Pelletier, editor of *Le Devoir* symbolizing “la ‘bonne (?) presse’”. The question mark indicated the ‘goodness’ of a set of newspapers – *Le Devoir*,

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<sup>68</sup> perhaps because LaPalme had been refused admission to the École in 1928.

Ottawa's *Le Droit* and Québec city's *Action catholique* – which kept to the precepts of proper journalistic endeavour as promulgated by the clergy. The very expression echoed that accorded to a similar (and commercially successful) trio fostered by the French clergy in Paris after 1900.<sup>69</sup>

LaPalme returned to *L'Ordre* for a drawing on March 9<sup>th</sup>, celebrating the newspaper's first year. A one-year-old baby with an Asselin nose is pulling at the limbs of a helpless ragdoll, each limb bearing the name of another francophone daily paper – among them the “bonne presse” trio (Figure 2-25). LaPalme's final drawing for *L'Ordre* was of King George V, appearing on May 4<sup>th</sup> just one day before Asselin ceased its publication (Figure 2-26).

Unable to continue in the face of censure from the Archbishop of Montreal who, having found the newspaper's opinions inimical to the proper conduct of the day-to-day life of Québec Catholics, had issued an edict forbidding the purchase of or advertisement in the paper any longer, Asselin immediately announced plans for a monthly, *La Renaissance*, which would not see the end of the year. Nonetheless, the adventure of *L'Ordre* had a profound impact on Québec journalism, literary and artistic culture. Asselin's example made him a guiding spirit for LaPalme and Chicoine and the other young writers on his paper. Many admirers took his lead, among them Jean-Louis Gagnon who later played a crucial role in LaPalme's career at several junctures from 1937 through 1962. In the wake of *L'Ordre*, LaPalme transplanted his career to New York, returning to Canada in

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<sup>69</sup> *Histoire générale de la presse française*, vol 3. p. 334-346.

1937 and moving first to Ottawa and then to Québec City where Gagnon, having manifested an initial phase of intense xenophobic separatist nationalism through 1935 and 1936, elected to join establishment journalism as the era of Maurice Duplessis got underway. Inviting LaPalme to join with him at *Le Journal*, Gagnon set the stage for the transformation of LaPalme from virtuoso celebrity caricaturist to a committed political cartoonist, engaged with the difficult Canadian federalist position for the Allied cause in wartime Québec.

#### **4.2. *Un Défiguré défini*: Bernard Valiquette and a vocabulary for LaPalme's caricature**

In the period between his work for *L'Ordre* and his taking up arms at Québec City, LaPalme's absence in New York forms a hiatus. We will address his stylistic development in 1935 and 1936 in the following chapter. His absence was productive in Québec caricature criticism; perhaps the removal from Québec of so quickly celebrated a new practitioner encouraged the formation of a critical language for his work. Several articles from this period show an increasing sophistication in the reaction to and appraisal of caricature in Québec critical writing.

Albert Lévesque and Olivar Asselin had understood LaPalme's potential and the importance of having a leading graphic talent in their arsenal. Another up-and coming publisher, equally concerned to support the influence of French culture, gave one of the most comprehensive assessments of this sophistication in the August 1935 issue of *La*

*Revue moderne*. Bernard Valiquette, at this time in the employ of Albert Lévesque at the Éditions de l'Action canadienne-française, outlined in the article "En parlant caricatures" a summary theory of, and critical checklist for, the practice of caricature.<sup>70</sup> Valiquette demonstrates familiarity not only with historical and contemporary European and Québec caricature, but also with the sources of caricature as a variant of literary expression whose sources stretch back to Antiquity, to Horace and Juvenal, thereby attesting to the wide range of readings accessible to members of the Québec élite through the classical studies of their youth. For our purposes, this testimony is especially important insofar as it presents a rare link to the theories of comedy and laughter which have been regularly present in the historiography of caricature studies. For while the increasingly frequent writings on the comic after Baudelaire (Bergson and Freud among them) would conceivably assist our assessment of LaPalme, it is another thing altogether to situate these concepts in his time.

Valiquette shows how difficult it is to explain what caricature is, and draws a synthesis of the various theories. Does it call on the theory of laughter, or is it a spontaneous lyricism founded in anger? It certainly appeals to faculties beyond laughter; caricature is ambiguous, ambivalent; too diverse to be reduced to one definition, consisting in outraged forms, grotesques; it may or may not have moral purpose or legend (annotation); it may present itself as sarcastic imagery that has no *charge* (deformation of drawing); it may have no comic or grotesque intention, but simply have the aim of being thought-provoking. Despite these conundrums over its theoretical core, it does have

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<sup>70</sup> Bernard Valiquette, "En parlant caricatures". *Revue moderne*, August 1935 : 10, 12.

imperatives of a technical order that is allied to the trace of an individual maker, and in this association to the virtuoso mark of a governing mind lies one half of the authority of caricature, the other half residing in its popular or public accessibility:

Elle exige dans le traitement du sujet de l'habileté, du doigté, le sens du ridicule, l'esprit de synthèse et, c'est là le point capital, commun à toutes sortes de caricatures, une originalité pure. "Elle s'appuie, comme le dit Jean Charbonneau, sur une observation impitoyable et recherche le caractère et l'expression plus que la simple vérité. [...] Envisagée sous un autre aspect, on voit que la caricature est un art essentiellement populaire et ne saurait, par conséquent, admettre l'hermetisme. Il faut que le trait caricatural, pour être compris, réponde à une convention déjà admise par la majorité. La légende ne suffit pas à donner le sens complet d'une caricature et de toute nécessité il doit y avoir conformité entre la représentation synthétique que fait l'artiste d'une idée ou d'une chose et la conception du public.

In building up to praise of Robert LaPalme, Valiquette tells at first that there has not yet been a Canadian caricature, there have merely been Canadian caricaturists. The vast majority of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century efforts were "Barbouillages grossiers ou vides de sens! Certaines lois élémentaires de mesure et d'équilibre, dont il faut tenir compte même en caricaturant, sont totalement ignorées." Canadian caricature got its true start with Henri Julien who, although self-taught, excelled in drawing and composition. Valiquette enters into a historical survey of Julien and his successors which strengthens not only our sense of a critical assessment of the course of caricature in Québec, but indeed the defining moment represented by Julien's 1899 series, an endeavour whose promise was unfulfilled in the short term. "Peut-être est-ce défaut de synthèse qui l'aura empêché de devenir un grand caricaturiste. Ses 'By-Town Coons,' admirables de mouvement et d'esprit caustique, suffiraient à lui assurer une place de choix dans l'histoire de la caricature canadienne." Listing the worthy peers and heirs of Julien (Hector Berthelot, Cassan, Raoul Barré, Alonzo Ryan, Samuel Hunter, Joseph Charlebois, J.W. Bengough, Ulrich

Lamarche; Arthur Racey, Albéric Bourgeois), he turns his attention to the young generation.

Les Benjamins, mériteraient, eux aussi, une étude attentive, car plusieurs autorisent de grands espoirs. Paul Leduc, Jacques Pelletier, Essel, Maurice Hébert (très habile le crayon à la main, mais qui a commis l'erreur de publier un 'Cours de caricature' (sic), recueil invraisemblable de cocasseries et de fautes de français); Jean-Paul Faucher et, incidemment, René Chicoine, à qui l'on doit quelques admirables réussites quoique son œuvre soit plutôt orientée vers celle que Carlo Rim appelle la sœur sérieuse de la caricature : la peinture.<sup>71</sup>

All this builds up to a tribute to LaPalme, "celui qui, quoique très jeune, s'est révélé le plus grand de tous," who has given, right from the appearance of the series of portrait heads in the *Almanach de la langue française* in 1933, "œuvres définitives:"

LaPalme s'affranchit de toutes les formules, de toutes les conventions et donne l'impression de travailler sur du neuf. Absolument devancé de ses devanciers canadiens, avec lesquels il n'a aucun lien de parenté, il cousine de loin avec les cubistes, mais les éléments qu'il a pris chez eux ne l'empêchent pas, par une réaction bien française, de respecter les lois fondamentales de mesure, d'équilibre et d'harmonie. Son rendu net, dégagé, ne laisse rien au hasard, sous une apparence d'improvisation. Il joue avec les lignes, ironise avec les courbes, jette quelques traits comme au hasard et vous avez, fixées à jamais, par des moyens tout à fait nouveaux, un métier neuf, des têtes ressemblantes quoique vues sous un angle étrange autant qu'inédit. Son art s'exerce à l'extrême pôle de la fantaisie.

Recalling the anecdote of the French delegates to Québec who reproduced LaPalme's caricatures in the *Echo of Paris*, calling him the Canadian Sennep, he concludes: "Ce qu'il a fait jusqu'ici le classe, peut-être, selon le mot de *l'Ordre* parmi nos futures gloires nationales."

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<sup>71</sup> Carlo Rim (pseudonym, 1905 -) visual artist, critic, essayist, novelist, journalist, founder of *Jazz* magazine (Paris, 1954-), was best known as a scriptwriter and film director who worked with, among others, Georges Méliès, André Gide, Raimu, Fernandel, Max Jacob and Sacha Guitry. One publication listed at the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec for the period prior 1935, may thereby have been accessible to Bernard Valiquette: *Ma belle Marseille*, published at Paris by Denoël in 1934.

### 4.3. A virtuoso line, between order and disorder

LaPalme's studied virtuosity – so French, so apparently innovative and yet so restrained, measured – strikes the typically commendable note of irony which, altogether, aligns him with the celebrated French ironic spirit. “Disfiguring” without apparent malice, he performs actions which are cloaked in terms of violence from which the critic has emptied out the impact. The sense of belonging to a well-regulated order of critical approach – essentially celebratory of celebrity, adapting to a Québec environment an international, American style of caricature tempered with French spirit – not unlike the model of the *Chat Noir* and its “Anglo-Saxon humour blended with French love of play on words” – indeed brings LaPalme's caricature within the parameters of *L'Ordre*.

And yet, if we consider this very word against the representation of *order* in the work of Asselin's hero Léon Bloy, we may gather that Asselin's own use of the word was, after all, ironic itself. It is worth returning to Asselin's conversations with Claude-Henri Grignon in these same years, as Asselin advised his friend in the stages of writing *Un homme et son péché* (1933). Grignon's achievement was to bring into being, through the recourse to a rich French-Canadian idiom, rife with language long-unaccepted by the guardians of Québec literary expression, the tale of a world governed by an archetypal wealthy miser. The impact of this tale was significant largely because, beyond its undoubted qualities of language and expression, it traduced the image of the Habitant and erected a towering anti-hero (whose exploits have indeed come to achieve lasting popularity in Québec culture). The research carried out by the editors of the Bibliothèque



du Nouveau Monde edition (1986) show the extent to which Asselin spurred Grignon on in writing the novel, and indeed to what extent the baseness made visible in the story – particularly with respect to its strong sexual themes – would, in Asselin’s hands, have been made far more brutal. Asselin and Grignon discussed the need for Grignon to accept the publication of an expurgated version of his novel, in order to win sales – and in order to gain a living. But both felt that they had betrayed the spirit of Bloy. Bloy, incorruptible, devoted (or doomed) to abject poverty; Bloy, the mystic whose every writing was a ferocious engagement with the enemy: society, Republican, democratic and bourgeois French society in its totality. Bloy’s “écriture de la douleur”, unleashed through the pages of the *Chat Noir* and later Bloy’s own *Le Pal*, has been seen in recent Bloy studies as a social and literary satire dictated, in terms familiar to Baudelaire’s theory of laughter, by reference to the Absolute. Grignon clearly articulated this correspondence in a review, published in 1934, in which he took fellow writer Harry Bernard to task for an instance of inadequately understanding Baudelaire. Grignon extolled the poet’s profoundly Catholic realisation of a human state so fallen that it posited the existence of God and His grace. Here lay the ethical and latently un-measured potential for satire – for graphic satire as well: that it may, once established in the arsenal of criticism, be used to devastate the ordered representation of society from within, to begin to make visible the base, the excessive, all that could not be contained by the carefully-calibrated instances of ironic distancing and the mastery of written and visual language. At stake in the vulnerable ordered representation of society was, paradoxically, the Catholic Church itself, as Grignon made clear in 1933:

C’est toujours la même question torturante et difficile qui se dresse devant nous: celle du catholicisme et du mysticisme, sujet lourd de conséquences morales que

peu de cerveaux sont capables de résoudre. Personnellement, j'accepte, je comprends, je saisis le catholicisme tel qu'adoré, tel que pratiqué, tel qu'entendu, tel qu'enseigné par Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Huysmans, D'Aureville, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Léon Bloy et Charles Péguy.

Baudelaire reste le vrai catholique qui possède l'amour de Dieu plutôt que la crainte de l'enfer. Il ne joue pas à la confession, ni à la pénitence. Il est sincère, et un malaise continu le tient cloué sur la croix aux pieds du Christ. Et parce qu'il est sincère il dit des vérités profondes qui déchirent les entrailles des faux catholiques, des catholiques en sucre d'orge, comme il en est malheureusement trop.

De là l'anathème qui pèse sur l'oeuvre de Baudelaire.<sup>72</sup>

With the closing of *L'Ordre*, and the brief adventure of *La Renaissance* in 1935, Asselin's journalistic career – and his dream, reminiscent of Bloy's brief operation of his own journal *Le Pal* – came to an end. Taking a government position in 1936, Asselin withdrew to the religious community L'Oeuvre de la merci, devoted to helping Montreal's homeless, in whose company he died in 1937.<sup>73</sup> With Robert LaPalme in New York between 1935 and 1937, and Asselin definitively withdrawn from journalism, Asselin's follower Jean-Louis Gagnon would be the first to attempt to build on Asselin's example. Any rendez-vous for LaPalme's caricature with the rather more *Bloyen* climate Asselin might have pursued is of course pure conjecture. Nonetheless, in the 1935-37

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<sup>72</sup> Claude-Henri Grignon, *Ombres et clameurs. Regards sur la littérature canadienne-française* (Montréal: Éditions Albert Lévesque, 1933): 185. On Baudelaire and the *charogne* as metaphor, see Ainslie Armstrong McLees, *Baudelaire's "Argot Plastique". Poetic Caricature and Modernism*. Athens (Ga) and London: University of Georgia Press, 1989.

Grignon's memoir of the importance of Bloy for Asselin came in an unpublished draft biography of Asselin written in the 1960s, for which he intended the title *Le Pamphlétaire maudit*. Excerpts are found in Appendix III of the critical edition of Grignon's *Un homme et son péché* (édition critique par Antoine Sirois et Yvette Francoli; Montréal, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1986): 226-235. These make clear that both Grignon and Asselin saw Bloy as an example of an incorruptible and merciless critic. Asselin is reported to offer Grignon advice on his novel then in progress, which suggests that Asselin wished specifically to see a coarse examination of sexual matters in literature as a means of following Bloy's precepts in giving it a fuller tragic and violent dimension – addressing an underlying reflection on the world that would only bear fruit some 20 years later. Asselin and Grignon also commiserated over the lucrative result to Grignon of permitting an expurgated edition of his novel to be ordered by Athanase David for distribution to schools – quite against the precepts of their common hero.

<sup>73</sup> Marcel-Aimé Gagnon, *Olivier Asselin toujours vivant* (Montréal: les presses de l'Université du Québec, 1974): 69

period, the eruption of Spanish Civil War with its bitter tests of political and religious allegiance did witness, as we shall see in the next chapter, a recourse to violent fascist, anti-semitic imagery in the young nationalist press of which Jean-Louis Gagnon was briefly a member. The same Jean-Louis Gagnon would invite LaPalme, newly returned to Canada, to Québec City in 1937. They participated actively in the institutions of Canada that aligned itself with Great Britain at the outbreak of the Second World War. The polemical lessons of international anti-fascist caricature were not lost on Robert LaPalme when, after 1943, Québec's own civil war of ideologies resumed with the impending re-election of Maurice Duplessis for the first of four straight terms in office. The Catholic identity of Québec and the québécois – would become an emblem of resistance, and LaPalme would come to re-invent Maurice Duplessis as the expression of the basest natures of Québec society, perhaps finally delivering a blow, for Baudelaire, for Bloy, for Asselin. This is at any rate one of the genealogical lines to consider in response to Gérard Bouchard's unyielding astonishment, in his study on the relative operability of national myths in Québec history (*Raisons et contradictions*, 2003) at the so rapid dismantling of Church influence in Québec after Duplessis's death.

## Chapter Three

### Robert LaPalme, from portrait caricaturist to wartime graphic satirist (1935-1941)

#### 1. The 'Grande Noirceur' sets in

As 1935 began, Olivar Asselin's *L'Ordre* would barely survive five more months. Asselin closed down the paper on May 15<sup>th</sup>. His decision followed an edict from Cardinal Jean-Marie Rodrigue Villeneuve (Archbishop of Québec, 1931-1947). *L'Ordre*, which had not endeared itself to the clergy by attacks on the mediocre education system under its control, was heretofore forbidden to Catholic readers. This was a death warrant for almost any paper at the time. Asselin seized the occasion to make some fine anticlerical barbs in his final editorial. Above all, the paper's \$50,000 deficit made an exit under clerical interdiction a useful sally.<sup>1</sup> Asselin died in 1937. Twenty-five years later, Robert LaPalme remembered him in a caricature for Jean-Louis Gagnon's latest newspaper, *Le Nouveau Journal* (Figure 3-1). In the lines of his mature, sensualist style, the timorous LaPalme is shown presenting the vigorous Asselin with a barely scrawled portrait head – the caricature encapsulates how far his drawing had evolved. Asselin's wastepaper bin contains a jettisoned volume, Jean Bruchési's 1932 *Aux marches de l'Europe* – one of LaPalme's earliest illustrated books for Albert Lévesque's Librairie de l'Action canadienne française. The floor behind Asselin's desk is littered with the pages of *L'Action catholique*. As Asselin said: "quand la direction de *L'Action catholique* aura écrit quelques fois encore que j'ai traité les professeurs de l'enseignement de ratés,

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<sup>1</sup> LaPalme also interpreted Asselin's response to Cardinal Villeneuve's edict as the excuse necessary to cover the loss of financial support from the paper's backers. LaPalme (1997): 43-46.

d'incapables, de fainéants, d'ignorants, d'imbéciles, et que cet infâme mensonge aura reçu la sanction tacite de l'archevêché de Québec, anticlérique, je le serai certainement.”<sup>2</sup>

Asselin was not the only devout Catholic to criticize clerical control over secular matters in Québec, and thereby occupy a position of quite poignant irreconciliation – since his critique came from within his sense of faith and cultural identity to the Church. His was just one of the contradictions underlying a strange stasis which some historians have characterized as the “apolitisme” of Québec ideologies in the 1934-1936 period, in which the imagining of political and social action is unaccompanied by pragmatic programmes.<sup>3</sup> We may well ask if the paucity of this particular imagining is reflected in the nature of its political imagery – in particular, in its caricature. While in the glow of Asselin's example, LaPalme was a caricaturist of the visage and personality of Québec celebrity and achievement, but not a visual political satirist. The story of the years 1935-1943 is one of preparation. His transformation into a visual political satirist required a transformation of the political field, no less than that of the *critical* field we have already examined.

How can the scope of this transformation can be assessed? Historical remove imposes, at first glance, the sense of one era succeeding another. The previous chapter showed the development of Québec caricature in its political and critical contexts, in a long era of party-political Liberalism in Québec, stretching from 1900 to 1935 through the successive administrations of Lomer Gouin and Alexandre Taschereau. We've measured

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<sup>2</sup> Marcel-Aimé Gagnon, *Olivar Asselin toujours vivant* (Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1972): 67

<sup>3</sup> André-J. Bélanger, *L'apolitisme des idéologies québécoises : le grand tournant de 1934-1936* (Québec : Presses de l'Université Laval, 1974).

the slow growth of a polemical weapon whose latent power was ever more nurtured as the period wore on. It was a mode of political engagement founded in visual and literary traditions; its slow growth was in keeping with the sheer longevity of the political climate with which it engaged. The greatest apparent changes that it presented were, appropriately, on the surface, in keeping with the changes of taste in international visual graphic style which Québec society easily absorbed. These forms and their vehicles, the periodicals that shaped opinion, were imported from or reconstructed along American, British and French models that differently gauged the importance afforded to the visual barb.

This chapter embarks on the first two segments of the era which succeeded the “long Liberal early century.” It has become known as the *Grande noirceur*, the era of Maurice Duplessis in power (1936-1939, 1944-1959). Our span, through the years 1935-1943, will take us from the eve of his accession to power, through his defeat in 1939, when he promised, “Je reviendrai” – doing so in 1944. The two halves of this era show us Québec acting on the need for reform so long restrained in the Gouin-Taschereau era. In Duplessis’s first administration (1936-1939), this happened along conservative-nationalist lines with strong signs of authoritarianism in the face of socialist pressures for reform common to most Western democracies. In the wartime Liberal administration of Adélard Godbout, social reforms were advanced that presaged the Quiet revolution of the 1960s, while helping prosecute the Canadian war effort. The entire period was on many levels governed by war: by the fear of war, by fascination for war, by its imminence, by the response that Québec must – or must not – make. As the armed conflicts of Europe

escalated throughout the 1930s and Canadian society and government decided on their role in these conflicts, from the Spanish Civil War to the Second World War, the positions staked out on Québec's ideological battleground – largely the remit of newspapers, their owners (often politicians or clergy), their editors, journalists and, sometimes, their cartoonists – became more sharply defined and, at least at the level of rhetoric (both written and visual), violent.

This period was also marked by important shifts in the permissibility of violent address in Québec's visual political satire. The permission accorded operated on the absorption of practices from the left and right extreme edges of political discourse, towards a “commonsense” centre. This centre position, forged in time of war, was to be redeployed for a postwar world. The totalitarian temptation would be fought anew, both abroad (resurgent fascism, triumphant communism) and at home (the policies of Maurice Duplessis). If this movement from extremes to centre is observable, it's in part because the forces for building post war Canada included former proponents of extremist right wing politics alongside the staunch defenders of the Liberal vision of the country's future.

Robert LaPalme was caught in this political drift. In New York from 1935 to early 1937, then briefly at Ottawa before spending six years at Québec City, he was first and foremost an urbane celebrity caricaturist. He depicted a suave, dashing Québec Premier Maurice Duplessis at his parliamentary desk, cigarette in hand, a man of the world, young and dynamic, in the pages of Québec City's *Le Journal* in 1938 (Figure 3-2). In late

1943, LaPalme was drafted back to Montréal just as it became clear that all stops would have to be pulled out to fight a resurgent Maurice Duplessis, now leader of the opposition. In the prelude to the inevitable 1944 general election, Duplessis stood to benefit from French-Canadian revulsion at the federal Liberal government's imposition of wartime conscription. The mode of attack was exemplified by LaPalme's 1944 drawing of a flaccid-nosed, tired Duplessis apparently upset by his undigested "Chicken à la King", for *Le Canada*, the official Montréal paper of Prime Minister Mackenzie King's Liberal Party (Figure 3-3). Duplessis now appears in a line that relaxes into an anamorphism reminiscent of Jean Arp. Broadly-splashed brush marks quickly encompass generalized forms. But the line sharpens for the psychological observation due to Duplessis's face. It also neatly and precisely notes the padlocks on the door. For many of his opponents, the strongest mark of Duplessis's particular use of power was the padlock, because of the enactment in March 1937 of the so-called Padlock Law. The bill gave the government, of which Duplessis was also Attorney-general, the power to close down and lock up any premises suspected of harbouring subversive associations. The padlock not only became a symbol *par excellence* in the hands of Duplessis' opponents as soon as his return to power seemed likely, it endured as one of the markers of his identity throughout his premierships from 1944 to 1959, the year of his death. LaPalme configured this association closely in a process evocative of Charles Philipon's reduction of Louis-Philippe to a pear. In the next election year, 1948, Duplessis's profile had become the "key" to unlocking the padlock in the drawing "La Clef" (Figure 3-4). As we shall see in Chapter 5, whenever Duplessis's nose became transformed into another protuberance, his cleft chin took on an appropriate supporting role.



From suave celebration to sexually-laden attack: this was neither change of party affiliation, nor of provincial to federal affiliation, but rather a re-focusing on the very capacities of caricature. The re-focusing also came because of the war; LaPalme had come a long way from *L'Ordre*, Olivar Asselin and the ironic portrait caricature which seemed, in 1934, to be his *métier* and the bulwark of his rising reputation.

### 1.1. Robert LaPalme in New York, 1935-1936

On January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1935, LaPalme married Annette Demers (“Nanette”) and headed off for a honeymoon in New York City. Lest the readers of *L'Ordre* forget LaPalme, or think him too eager to forsake his home turf, a brief notice appeared in the paper on February 7<sup>th</sup> under the heading “Rien de mieux à New-York”. As to “Notre collaborateur et ami le dessinateur LaPalme, actuellement en voyage de nocces à New-York,...”, the notice explained that everything you could find in New York, you would find just as good if not better back home. It seems to be of some importance that readers of the newspaper know of LaPalme’s wedding, and of his travel. Yet, and this was apparently at the recommendation of Olivar Asselin himself, the couple settled in New York, remaining until early 1937.<sup>4</sup> LaPalme’s very distance from Montréal had to serve as fuel for a reputation that he was careful to maintain through messages home.

Indeed, on the very same day as his wedding to Annette, LaPalme appeared on the front page of *L'Ordre* in a new way: for once, as the subject of a cartoon, by his friend and

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<sup>4</sup> “ [...] Je suis allé à New York après m’être marié. C’est Asselin qui m’y avait encouragé.” LaPalme (1997): 87.

colleague René Chicoine (1910-1981) who would, in the 1950s, become art critic at *Le Devoir*.<sup>5</sup> Under the same heading “Nos futures gloires nationales” that had crowned LaPalme’s caricature portraits of eminent Québec personalities in late 1934, Chicoine portrayed his LaPalme as a dapper assemblage of lines, leaning on an oversize quill pen, in an outfit that might indeed be a suit for a gentleman’s wedding day (Figure 3-5).

Although without LaPalme’s fluency, this drawing used rhythms of closely spaced lines similar to his own, and to those of one J. Pelletier whose drawing of H. A. Therrault in the March 9<sup>th</sup> issue was made up of striations evocative of cubist renditions of African masks (Figure 3-6), - not unlike the mask drawing made by LaPalme for *Le Canada* a good year earlier (Figure 3-7).

In bidding adieu to his *Ordre* readers, Asselin trumpeted the imminent birth of a weekly paper that would shortly follow – his last publication, *La Renaissance*. LaPalme once again sent work from New York.<sup>6</sup> His approach to graphic space had been transformed: rather than geometric heads, LaPalme presented full figures in action, coherent with surfaces of simulated cut-out paper, whose simulation extended to creases, undulations, folds and shadows and whose overall unity depended on the visual participation of the figure in the overall plastic space of the work. In this way he presented sometime French Prime Minister Pierre Laval, Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie, Canadian Governor-

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<sup>5</sup> See Laurier Lacroix, “Le devoir et l’art du vingtième siècle au Québec” in Robert Lahaise, ed., *Le Devoir : reflet du Québec au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Montréal, Hurtubise HMH [Cahiers du Québec, collection Communications], 1994) : 163-182; on René Chicoine, see 176 : note 6 and 181 : 41.

<sup>6</sup> “Il a finalement lancé un autre journal, *La Renaissance*. J’ai travaillé à *La Renaissance*. Asselin ne pouvait plus se passer de moi, même si je me trouvais alors à New York: j’étais artiste à la mode, j’avais une cote.” LaPalme (1997): 45.

General Lord Tweedsmuir (the novelist John Buchan), and Canada's prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King (Figure 3-8). A sole pen-and-ink drawing, of Jovette-Alice Bernier (whose novel *La chair décevante* LaPalme had illustrated in 1932), portrayed her as a pansy (conflating with the original French sense of *pensée*) (Figure 3-9). Its integrated symbolic whole depended on a configuration of signs to achieve meaning that was richer than LaPalme had used in 1933-1934.<sup>7</sup>

These changes were borne out by the works LaPalme chose to highlight or collect in contemporary missives to Montréal newspapers or later in his 1950 retrospective.<sup>8</sup> That the majority of these works concerned performing artists seems appropriate given his meeting in the spring of 1935 with Wilfrid Pelletier (1896-1982), Québec expatriate and conductor of the orchestra of New York's Metropolitan Opera, and a likely contact of Olivar Asselin's.<sup>9</sup> According to LaPalme's 1997 memoir, this meeting led to his introduction to *Stage* magazine<sup>10</sup>, which would lead in turn to introductions to Chicago's *Ringmaster* magazine, to the *Review of Reviews*, the *Philadelphia Ledger* and to *The Nation*, the legendary left-wing weekly of New York which, at this time, could still cheerfully run advertisements for tourist trips to the Soviet Union.

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<sup>7</sup> Reprinted in Robert LaPalme, *LaPalme: les 20 premières années du caricaturiste canadien* (Ottawa : Cercle du Livre de France, 1950) [hereafter referred to as LaPalme (1950a)]: 52-55.

<sup>8</sup> The *Revue Moderne*, June 1936, learns that LaPalme has received important commissions; an unidentified French-language newspaper clipping dated 17 October 1936 confirms that he has been added to the regular contributors of *Ringmaster*.

<sup>9</sup> LaPalme 1997: 87.

<sup>10</sup> *The Stage*, a publication of the Theatre Guild of New York, was published between 1923 and 1939.

Certainly, all the evidence points to an exclusive engagement with performing artists subjects in these two years. In 1936, LaPalme appears to have retained the services of Gaston Nolin (1899-1998), the Québec singer then based in New York, to act as an agent – presumably to secure more assignments to portray performing arts celebrities.<sup>11</sup> A clipping from 1935 presents pencil drawings of Nolin and his group the *Grenadiers impériaux*.<sup>12</sup> In 1950, LaPalme chose to re-print one cartoon each from *The Stage* (Giuseppe Martinelli) and the *Philadelphia Ledger* (Erno Rapee).<sup>13</sup> Four cartoons from Chicago's *Ringmaster* magazine, a caricature magazine, again focus on stars of the stage (Ezio Pinza, Lauritz Melchior, Lily Pons, Dusolina Giannini).<sup>14</sup> Among the unpublished cartoons presented by LaPalme in 1950, the most telling are a linear caricature of Greta Garbo (p. 56) and a full oil painting caricature of Wilfrid Pelletier which, if it was unpublished in the US, did appear in *La Presse*: LaPalme seems to have been concerned throughout his new York sojourn to keep his name in the Montréal news, and to understand the value of publicity.

As for LaPalme's affiliations in the 1935-36 period, it is difficult to be precise. Expelled at the beginning of 1937 by US Immigration authorities for falsely claiming to be a student,<sup>15</sup> LaPalme returned to Canada with, above all, the evolution of his artistic

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<sup>11</sup> Gaston Nolin was at this time a member of the *Grenadiers impériaux*, a singing quartet presented from time to time by Wilfrid Pelletier at the Metropolitan Opera. Recordings by Nolin are available on the website of Collections Canada.

<sup>12</sup> Unidentified clipping conserved in Robert LaPalme's press clippings scrapbook (1932-1946) [hereafter referred to as *LaPalme press 1932-46*, signed 'LA PALME/35'.

<sup>13</sup> LaPalme (1950a): 58, 60.

<sup>14</sup> LaPalme (1950a): 59.

knowledge and competence his chief attribute. Far more abundant evidence exists for the six following years, when he strove to establish a career at Québec City. This evidence is often contradictory and puzzling, but it yields powerful indicators for the very difficulty of holding any position for very long in the contexts of Québec politics between 1937 and 1943.

## 2. Robert LaPalme at Québec City, 1937-1943

On returning to Canada from the US in early 1937, LaPalme effectively prolonged an exile from Montréal. He worked briefly but relatively prolifically for *Le Droit* at Ottawa in late winter 1937. From Spring 1937 through 1943 he was at Québec City; first, at Jean-Louis Gagnon's invitation, for *Le Journal*, and later *L'Événement-Journal*, from 1937 through 1940. He worked for the École des Beaux-arts de Québec between September 1937 and December 1939, when he was abruptly dismissed by its director Jean-Baptiste Soucy – possibly as a result of his work for *L'Événement-Journal*, as we shall see. He worked with and befriended artists such as Jean-Paul Lemieux, Jean Palardy, Omer Parent, Alfred Pellán and Jori Smith. He then taught at Laval University's Faculté des sciences under its dean, Adrien Pouliot. Between 1939 and 1941 he worked at instigating the Galerie municipale de Québec, where he hosted the controversial *Exposition des Indépendants* curated by père Marie-Alain Couturier before its presentation in Montréal. Finally, he contributed to Eugène L'Heureux's *L'Action catholique* beginning in December 1939. One of his wartime cartoons for this paper was included in the British

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<sup>15</sup> LaPalme (1997): 90.

Commonwealth War Cartoons exhibition that was circulated by the National Gallery of Canada and brought by LaPalme to the Galerie municipale in 1942. In 1943, he was called back to Montréal by *Le Canada*'s Edmond Turcotte (another alumnus of Olivar Asselin's and a figure once described by *La Nation* as a communist traitor).<sup>16</sup> The Liberal-party newspaper was preparing the ground for the 1944 provincial election in the wake of the 1942 conscription crisis.

On the basis of the institutions which hired him, LaPalme worked at first in an orthodox-to-radical conservative milieu which was struggling to define its own role amid the changes inexorably working through Québec society. When each institution is studied one at a time, we can articulate the transformations taking place in LaPalme's type of subject, his graphic treatment and in the political message involved.

### **2.1. *Le Droit*, Winter-Spring 1937**

On their return from the U.S., Robert and Nanette LaPalme settled first in Ottawa where LaPalme became the caricaturist for *Le Droit*. This independent catholic newspaper was one of three such francophone journals established in Eastern Canada in the wake of the 1891 papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* through which Pope Leo XIII recognized the need for active engagement in the betterment of the lives of workers. This gave impetus to the Catholic union movement and to a direct engagement in public matters, notably through

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<sup>16</sup> For example, in the article *Le Canada, Clarté, L'Autorité/Les journaux bolshevico-trustards/Le Sénateur Dandurand Patron du communiste Edmond Turcotte* (*La Nation*, September 3rd 1936 : 1).

journalism.<sup>17</sup> These three newspapers became collectively known as “La bonne presse”, in echo of a similar trio in France.<sup>18</sup> The first was *L’Action Sociale Catholique*, directly established in December 1907 by the Québec archdiocese as both a newspaper and an active printing concern. This title became *L’Action catholique* in 1917. The second newspaper associated with this movement was Henri Bourassa’s *Le Devoir*, founded in 1910 and counting among its initial staff, but only briefly, both Olivar Asselin and Jules Fournier whose combative and witty polemical journalism was alien to the spirit of the authoritarian Bourassa and his lieutenant Omer Héroux. By the 1930s and 1940s, editor-in-chief Héroux and director Georges Pelletier came to help *Le Devoir* symbolize the reactionary position in Québec.<sup>19</sup> *Le Droit* was founded in Ottawa in January 1913, above all in response to the abrogation of French-language rights in Ontario during an extreme-Orangeist phase in that Province’s history. While journalists commonly transited from one of these three papers to another in the span of their careers, each title guarded its own identity and flavour. *Le Droit*’s cultural pages in the 1930s are closest in spirit to those we have seen in our study of *Le Canada*, *La Presse* and *La Revue Moderne* in Chapter Two. LaPalme’s work for *Le Droit* shows little discontinuity with *L’Ordre*; but the intervening experience of New York had without doubt had an effect on his style.

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<sup>17</sup> See our discussion in Chapter One.

<sup>18</sup> See Claude Bellanger et al., *Histoire générale de la presse française. Tome 3 : de 1871 à 1940* (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1972) [hereafter referred to as *Histoire générale de la presse française* (vol 3)] : 333-336.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Comeau and Luc Desrochers, *Le Devoir : un journal indépendant, 1910-1995* (Sainte-Foy : Presses de l’Université du Québec, 1996). See Jack Jedwab, “Notre maître : le passé?” (199-210) and Paul-André Comeau, “L’isolationnisme du quotidien *Le Devoir* durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale”(283-288).

At *Le Droit*, LaPalme busily resumed the constitution of the portrait gallery begun for *L'Ordre* with the difference that the portrait-head had acquired attributes that were organized to convey the caricature's central message. There were four registers of subject: international (Léon Blum (Figure 3-10) , Adolf Hitler, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Benito Mussolini), national (William Lyon Mackenzie King, Lord Tweedsmuir, R.B. Bennett, Ernest Lapointe, Raoul Dandurand, Mitchell Hepburn, William Eberhart and Paul Martin Sr.), Québec-provincial (a host of subjects including Jean Bruchési and Pierre Casgrain), and representative of the arts (French poet and thinker Paul Claudel, Hull artist Jean Dallaire and author Louvigny de Montigny).

At the same time, LaPalme's return to Canada made the news. On March 11th, he was "Peint par lui-même" in *Le Bien Public* [Trois-Rivières]. On March 27th, articles in *La Presse* and *The Gazette* signalled an exhibition of LaPalme's drawings at Eatons in downtown Montréal, including his oil caricature of Wilfrid Pelletier.<sup>20</sup> In "Un défricheur de masques : R. LaPalme", the "Activité artistique" column in *La Presse* updated the reader on LaPalme's activities, reprinting his images of Lord Tweedsmuir, Mackenzie King and Camilien Houde. At *The Gazette*, "R.H.A" (Robert Ayre?) opined : "Mr. La Palme has a keen eye and a pretty wit but in the final analysis his genius is not so much in revealing character as in the play of fancy for its own sake, a delight in line – and his line is firm and alive – a perverse pleasure in turning people into queer geometrical or vegetable forms."<sup>21</sup> In *La Patrie*, Jean St-Georges warned : "Qu'on se hâte de le garder,

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<sup>20</sup> "Wilfrid Pelletier vu par La Palme", *La Presse* June 27<sup>th</sup> 1936; R.H.A.[Robert Ayre], « Caricatures », *The Gazette* March 27<sup>th</sup> 1937

<sup>21</sup> R.H.A., op. cit.



de peur de le voir fuir vers des cieux plus cléments.” Indeed, *La Presse* seemed to catch on to this possibility on May 15th, printing a photograph of LaPalme with the command : “Sauvez-vous vite! Quand Robert LaPalme, notre brillant caricaturiste d’Ottawa, vous scrute avec ces yeux mussoliniens, c’est qu’il trouve votre binette ‘caractéristique’.”

## **2.2. Robert LaPalme and Jean-Louis Gagnon: *La Nation*, *Le Journal* and *L’Événement-Journal***

“Après quelques mois,” remembered LaPalme, “ nous sommes partis pour Québec, où Jean-Louis Gagnon m’a reçu au *Journal*.”<sup>22</sup> Gagnon, the devoted admirer of Olivar Asselin, would prove to be one of LaPalme’s closest professional friends, inviting him to join forces at several moments in their careers. In emulation of Asselin, who had ensured the presence of caricature at *Le Canada*, *L’Ordre* and *La Renaissance*, Gagnon followed suit at *Vivre* – with, among others, the reprint of LaPalme’s cartoon of Lionel Groulx from *L’Ordre* (Figure 2-18). At *La Nation*, Hélène Jobidon (soon to become Gagnon’s wife) was one of the principal (and most ferocious) artists. Gagnon’s association with LaPalme was not to end with *Le Journal* and its successor *L’Événement-Journal*. They would later both be on the staff of *Le Canada*; and in 1959, a newly empowered Jean-Louis Gagnon would persuade LaPalme to leave his chair at *Le Devoir* and join him at *La Presse*; taking LaPalme along when he founded the (short-lived) *Nouveau Journal* in 1962. At Québec City in the late 1930s, Gagnon played a key role in LaPalme’s career for he brought him to the centre of political power in Québec, to a repositioning that

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<sup>22</sup> LaPalme (1997): 90.

would ultimately – although by no means immediately – transform LaPalme's sense of the very purpose of his caricature.

As with so many stories involving the cartoonist's political allegiance in Canada's first century, much depends on the ideological or basely pragmatic relationships entertained between newspaper, editor, publisher, and political party affiliation. Reversals of allegiance could come swiftly and with often baffling effect. The 1935-1940 period was fraught with realignment in Québec. In this climate, the newspapers that were strategically owned, bought and sold by political parties and their sympathetic business interests, enjoyed turbulent sessions of the clairvoyance necessary to retain commercial influence – for at stake was the lucrative awarding of government advertising and printing contracts.

### **2.2.1. Jean-Louis Gagnon, *Vivre* and *La Nation***

Where LaPalme's politics are difficult to ascertain before the early 1940s, those of Gagnon are marked by a fascinating drift amidst very defined if complex political and personal world-views, each contested by the fear of the violent upheavals transforming Europe, North Africa and Asia. Gagnon would repeatedly prove to be a significant instigator in the history of mid-twentieth century journalism in Québec. He was particularly important for changes in LaPalme's career. His initial position that was, as we have seen, at once fundamentalist, separatist and tending to the extreme right wing in his work at *Vivre* (1934-1935). These tendencies emerged fully at *La Nation* throughout

the better part of 1936 (the paper survived until 1939). Gagnon himself characterised his early beliefs as “nationaliste-socialiste”, influenced by the monarchist-nationalist and ultra-right *Action française* (especially attractive to young disaffected *petit-bourgeois* intellectuals following its interdiction by Rome in 1926), which held among other beliefs that democracy itself was nefarious to the proper order of society.<sup>23</sup> Gagnon’s beliefs in this vein in effect skirted the tenor of his admiration for Olivar Asselin – the *Vivre* crew had sought out Asselin in the summer of 1934. Recognizing the latter’s fundamental humanism, and espousing his defense of the nation through the promotion of excellence of education and the correct use of language, Gagnon was equally attracted to the corporatist –nationalist doctrines of Lionel Groulx, that sought salvation in the triumph of collective rights and will. Tensions arose within these positions, often irreconcilable. As Gerard Bouchard has shown in his recent studies, these contradictions were often the life-force of Groulx and his followers.<sup>24</sup>

Still a student, Gagnon had answered a call issued by *L’Ordre* for anonymous letters on the poor quality of Québec’s (clerical) education, particularly in the matter of the French language. Gagnon obliged. His anonymity was, unfortunately, uncovered, and this led to his expulsion from university. Asselin duly took Gagnon under his wing. In 1935, Asselin appeared for the defence in a libel action brought against *Vivre* after Gagnon and his cohorts described the leaders of an opposing journal as “pederasts”.<sup>25</sup> Asselin was also

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<sup>23</sup> Jean-Louis Gagnon, *Les Apostasies. Tome I : les coqs du village* (Montréal : La Presse, 1985) [Hereafter referred to as Gagnon, *Apostasies I*]: 38.

<sup>24</sup> These books are discussed in Chapter Six.

<sup>25</sup> Preoccupations with sexual life find their way with great difficulty into cultural discourse in this period. During the brief adventure of *La Renaissance*, Asselin published a reportage by Gagnon on life at

instrumental in securing a job for Gagnon at *La Voix de l'Est*, which lasted until the end of 1935. Returning to Québec City, Gagnon helped found *La Nation*. It was conceived and launched as a nationalist, separatist and extreme right-wing weekly publication by Gagnon, Pierre Chaloult and lawyer Paul Bouchard in February 1936. The first page carried praise from Lionel Groulx, who had also admired *Vivre*.<sup>26</sup> The first months of the paper were devoted to campaigns against the corruption of the dying Taschereau administration. Support was given to the wise ideas promulgated by the fledgling Action Libérale Nationale (ALN), a group that had broken with the Liberal Party and was headed by Paul Gouin. Especially favoured was the programme for the nationalization of electricity put forward by Dr Philippe Hamel. *La Nation* also began to expound its virulent anti-parliamentarian, anti-democratic, anti-communist and anti-Semitic ideology. At first sympathetic to conservative leader Maurice Duplessis by virtue of his alliance with the ALN group, *La Nation* soon excoriated him when, following his victory, he excluded any ALN members from his cabinet. *La Nation* cried foul and accused Duplessis of caving in to the British imperialist demands of St James Street, the bastion of Anglophone finance. Ironically, the unsuccessful relationship with this financial stronghold would plague Duplessis' first administration, rendering his economic planning nearly impossible, and leading directly to his early (and also unsuccessful) re-election

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Valcartier, one of the work camps set up to give out of work men relief under the administration of R.B. Bennett (Canadian prime minister, Conservative, 1930-1935). Of the many aspects of this reportage designed to show the terrible conditions of this camp was a description of the life of the "third sex."

<sup>26</sup> Groulx remembered: "Novembre 1934, lettre à *Vivre*, revue de jeunes récemment fondée à Québec; reproduction d'un portrait caricatural de l'abbé Groulx par La Palme [printed opposite p 240]. Je dis pourquoi j'aime *Vivre*; pour sa "foi dans la vie", "en nos ressources d'Âme". Conseils à ces jeunes, entre autres: "Soyez sévères, graves, sans pourtant verser dans trop de pessimisme. [Voyez l'exemple de grands éveilleurs contemporains: un Mussolini, un Dollfuss]." Aujourd'hui, je relis cette lettre avec un certain plaisir." Lionel Groulx, *Mes mémoires* (vol 3): 260-261.

attempt in 1939.<sup>27</sup> Oddly enough, the group around Gagnon and Bouchard at *La Nation* included Albert Pelletier (no relation to the author and critic), stepfather to René Lévesque who would, as a Liberal MP, complete the nationalization of Hydro Québec in 1962.<sup>28</sup> From the outset, *La Nation* presented a major illustration or caricature on its front page, at the top of the centre column. In this, the habit not only of French caricature journals but, within Québec, of the journals with which Asselin was involved - *Les Débats*, *Le Nationaliste*, *L'Action*, *L'Ordre* and *La Renaissance* – was continued. Three types of imagery appeared, signed by identifiable names or by pseudonyms. A *terroir* imagery, produced by Maurice Gaudreau (1907-1980), gave the initial visual tone. “L’église du Cap-de-la-Madeleine” was a reproduction of a wood engraving (Figure 3-11).<sup>29</sup> It accompanied the text of a letter to Editor Pierre Chaloult from Lionel Groulx, saluting the new publication. The image harmonized with the presiding nationalist ideology, focusing on landscape, ancestry and Church as the media of nationalist feeling, derived out of Groulx by way of Maurice Barrès, Léon Daudet and Charles Maurras.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> As Jean-Louis Gagnon remarked, « [...] depuis Gouin, depuis trente ans, la chose publique s’administrait dans l’ordre et le calme. Duplessis dirige, au contraire, un gouvernement de m’as-tu-vu. Lui-même est un être fantasque, un esprit brouillon. Il n’agit pas, il s’agite. Trois ans ont suffi : la direction est déboussolée et le parti en voie de dislocation. Au début, on naviguait à vue : on navigue maintenant à l’aveuglette. Comme un commandant, les matelots sont en goguette. Pour les plus malins, c’est la foire d’empoigne; UBU roi a succédé au roi Pétaud.” Gagnon, *Apostasies* I: 168.

<sup>28</sup> See Pierre Godin, *René Lévesque un enfant du siècle 1922-1960* (Montréal : Boréal, 1994) : 90-91 and passim. Lévesque was firmly brought up in this right to far-right milieu; his first wife Louise L’Heureux was the daughter of Eugène L’Heureux, editor of *L’Action catholique* (ibid.: 103-106).

<sup>29</sup> Maurice Gaudreau, “L’église de Cap-de-la-Madeleine”. *La Nation*, vol 1 no 1 (February 26, 1934): 1.

<sup>30</sup> Groulx recounted the influence of these in the context of a general pessimism prevalent in the early 1930s on the state of French-Canadian nationalist activism. Where was there a ‘maître à penser’ such as Barrès? At the same time, René Chaloult commended the Vivre group to Groulx, stressing that their sources were to be found in Maurras, Daudet and, in Québec, Asselin. Groulx, *Mémoires* III: 270, 290. Although they shared as a priority the defense of French culture, Asselin did not share in the reactionary tenor of Maurras and Daudet, or Barrès for that matter. The monarchist (anti-parliamentarian, anti-Republican) Maurras had led the *Action française* movement that was a model for the *Action canadienne*.

The second type of imagery offered a frank and brutal graphic satire quite unlike anything else being published in Québec at the time – a satire so dependent on un-ironic and agreed codes of recognition that it became anti-satiric. This imagery evolved as the Spanish Civil War was launched in the summer of 1936; its tone was explicitly anti-Semitic and anti-communist in caricatures produced mainly by Hélène Jobidon, who married Gagnon in September 1936 and who also authored sympathetic separatist parodies of the *joual* poetry made hugely popular in 1932 by Jean Narrache.<sup>31</sup> A prime example of Jobidon's work appeared on the front page of the June 25<sup>th</sup> issue, which coincided with the annual St-Jean Baptiste celebrations. This was "Le destin de notre nation sans le séparatisme" (Figure 3-12). A cigar-smoking John Bull/Herod accepts a silver platter with Baptiste's head (a reincarnation of the type developed by Henri Julien and Albéric Bourgeois, open-eyed and pipe-smoking), from a grotesquely-rendered and stereotyped Jewish Salomé. The weekly's political position was very clear: Québec must separate to escape the British-Imperialist-Jewish-conspiracy and fulfill its destiny as a fascist French society.<sup>32</sup>

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française movement founded in 1917; as we have seen, the Action française was banned by the Vatican in 1926. In the Second World War, Maurras was a leading ideologue in support of the Vichy government led by Marshal Pétain. Maurice Barrès (1862-1923) was a prime force in the growth of extreme right-wing nationalism in early twentieth-century France. He articulated a extremist nationalist position and a mystical, romantic engagement with notions of land, national identity and belonging that bear many echoes with the nationalist cultural projects of Québec in the same era. Barrès's thought is explored in detail in Zeev Sternhell, *La France, entre nationalisme et fascisme: de l'historicisme au nationalisme de la terre et des morts* (Paris: Fayard, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> The story of Gagnon and Jobidon's meeting around the end of *Vivre* and the beginning of *La Nation* is told in Gagnon, *Apostasies* I: 186-189.

<sup>32</sup> Hélène Jobidon, "Le destin de notre nation sans le séparatisme," *La Nation* (June 25, 1936): 1. The caption below reads: "Après soixante-dix ans de bonn-entannnt, Salomé-Cohen offre la tête de Jean-Baptiste à Hérode-John Bull". The verbal caricature of the words *bonne entente* had frequently appeared in Asselin's *L'Ordre*.

A third order of images appeared in *La Nation* during the Gagnon period: caricatures signed by the apparently pseudonymous “Huron”. If these were by LaPalme, they were quite unlike anything else he made; statutory and hate-inciting racial characterizations in carefully blended, highly-charged symbolic and verifiable referential spaces, combining to produce a straight coherence without an iota of the élan and playful humour of LaPalme’s work, and at opposite poles of the David Low-like humanistic and pro-Allied combativeness he would explore at *L’Action catholique* in 1940-43 and decisively adopt at *Le Canada* after 1943. At most, the organization of black-and-white masses in these *Nation* cartoons speaks to an aesthetic preoccupation shared with LaPalme and many others of the period.

Lionel Groulx happily remembered *La Nation* and *Vivre* in his memoirs. He kept track of its founders; most were eventually recuperated in government positions ranging from the Ministry of fisheries to the Information office of the National Film Board.<sup>33</sup> One of their

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<sup>33</sup> Groulx remembered what became of them all : “Pierre Chaloult [1912- : journaliste ; cofondateur de la revue *Vivre* et du journal *La Nation*; secrétaire du ministre provincial du Travail, des Mines et des Pêcheries [in the 1940-45 Adélard Godbout administration]; professeur de littérature à l’Académie commerciale de Québec (1944-1945); directeur général du service d’information de l’Office national du Film (Ottawa); chef de cabinet à Ottawa (1960) [in the Progressive Conservative government of John Diefenbaker]; animateur à la télévision française (Ottawa); chroniqueur judiciaire au *Nouveau-Journal* [Jean-Louis Gagnon’s newspaper of 1961-62]; chroniqueur politique au *Droit*, à la *Patrie* (1962-66); actuellement [1970] fonctionnaire à Québec.” Lionel Groulx, *Mes mémoires* (Vol 3): 198, n 14.

Groulx also corroborated the foregoing with a citation of a letter from the former editor of *La Nation*’s Marcel Hamel who had taken orders. This “novice bénédictin m’écrivait, le 19 novembre 1941, de Saint-Benoit du-Lac: ‘L’Équipe s’est dispersée à tous les vents de la pensée: Pierre Chaloult est secrétaire de ministre; J.-L. Gagnon cause du scandale à l’*Événement-Journal*; J. P. Després est secrétaire de l’École du Père Lévesque, Roger Vézina [he and Bouchard were both lawyers at the time of the foundation of *La Nation*] a publié un bouquin sur le Crédit; Albert Pelletier est mort deux mois passés [this was René Levesque’s stepfather, Diane Dionne’s second husband, who died 1941 at age 39 of stomach cancer – see Godin, op. cit: 116] Paul Bouchard attend l’heure de la Providence; et le dernier de tous, l’avorton comme écrivait S. Paul, s’est anéanti sous le froc des moines d’occident. Voilà, vous en conviendrez, une suite de vocations pittoresques, et qui ont toutes sorti de la boîte de pandore québécoise [sic], aux beaux jours des engueulades et des coups de matraque.”

number, Marcel Hamel, tinged a reminiscence written to Groulx with a certain wistful menace:

À *La Nation*, dont vous évoquiez la disparition, nous avons été ces adolescents sérieux et voulant accorder leurs destins avec un idéal. Comme les idées ne meurent pas, qu'elles couvent sous la cendre, il se peut bien que, plus tard, on aille y chercher à cette sincérité et ferveur d'un beau plaisir l'étincelle qui allumera les vastes incendies: littéralement, les politiciens prendront alors le feu au derrière.

It may be useful to ask just which embers Jean-Louis Gagnon carried away. The Gagnon couple worked intently at *La Nation* with ever more extreme rhetoric until, quite abruptly, the front page of the December 31 issue announced the departure of Gagnon and Chaloult following a treacherous takeover attempt.<sup>34</sup> After this, according to Lionel Groulx, Gagnon became, of all things, a profoundly committed communist – for a time.<sup>35</sup>

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Groulx' memory of *La Nation* makes no any overt reference to its virulent anti-Semitism nor to its fascism; and *La Nation* is heartily approved by Groulx. But the Maurassian Bouchard did not go far enough: "Paul Bouchard est un franc nationaliste et nationaliste de mouvance canadienne-française. Catholique, ne l'est-il qu'à la façon maurassienne [i.e., as an atheist]? Un jour que je l'exhortais discrètement à s'exprimer, en ses articles ou discours, de manière plus explicite sur ce point, il me répondait qu'il avait horreur des professions de foi à coups de "trompette". Fort bien. Mais il y a une manière de confesser sa foi, sa confiance en elle, en la doctrine catholique, en l'Église pour toute restauration sociale et nationale, une manière, dis-je, qui n'a rien à voir avec la trompette."

Marcel Hamel wrote an article in *La Nation* in praise of Valdombre, Claude-Henri Grignon. Citing the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Léon Bloy, Hamel paints a vision of 'Bloyness' that is at odds with Grignon's own memory in portrait of Asselin.

<sup>34</sup> "Sans tambour ni trompettes, sans avertissements, par la porte de derrière, deux collaborateurs du journal, MM Jean-Louis Gagnon et Pierre Chaloult, ont quitté les rangs de notre rédaction après une tentative infructueuse pour s'emparer à eux seuls de *La Nation*. Contrairement à leurs espérances, nous avons réussi à publier la semaine de leur départ et, allégée, *La Nation* va poursuivre sa marche ascendante vers l'avenir. [...] Quant à *La Nation*, elle continue les affaires sous la même raison sociale et avec le même personnel bien qu'une nouvelle société d'édition ait été enregistrée qui ne comprend plus que les quatre membres fondateurs de *La Nation* et du mouvement séparatiste: MM. Paul Bouchard, Albert Pelletier, Paul Talbot et Roger Vézina." *La Nation* (December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1936): 1.

<sup>35</sup> "Et qui était-ce que Jean-Louis Gagnon? Un autre que le groupe n'accepta qu'avec discrétion. Je me souviens d'une visite que me fit un soir à mon cabinet de travail de la rue Sherbrooke, le jeune Gagnon. Autant que je puis conjecturer, c'était quelque temps après la dissolution du groupe de *La Nation*. Jean-Louis Gagnon m'arriva avec les yeux embués d'une vague mystique. Il y avait quelque temps que l'on n'entendait plus parler de lui. Venait-il de subir l'initiation au communisme? S'était-il prêté à quelque lavage de cerveau? D'une voix volontairement basse, discrète et chaude, il m'entretint de l'à-propos, des beautés de la doctrine de Marx, de l'irrésistible haine qu'elle savait développer en ses adeptes contre le



His erstwhile companion Paul Bouchard continued to lead *La Nation* on republican-separatist, apocalyptic and paranoid extreme-right lines, before joining Duplessis as propaganda coordinator for the Union nationale in time for the 1939 election.<sup>36</sup> In his authorized biography, Paul Bouchard alleged that Gagnon's fascist writings in 1936 were a cover for his true alliance to the Communist Party of Canada. The matter is unresolved.

### 2.2.2. *Le Journal and L'Événement-Journal*

Whatever his true political affiliation at this time, Jean-Louis Gagnon had also been at *Le Journal* since the spring of 1936. This conservative weekly paper had been established in 1929 with critic and pundit Louis Francoeur (1895-1941) installed at the helm, to support what then seemed like a hopeless Conservative party against Liberals who had been in power at Québec City since 1900.<sup>37</sup> Yet the paper's backers were confident that the

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capitalisme. Et alors, concluait-il, "puisque nous sommes rongés", dévorés par le capitalisme étranger, voyez donc quelle puissance, quelle fécondité de haine nous pourrions insuffler à notre peuple contre l'ennemi no 1"! Entrevue qui me laissa gravement songeur. Peu d'années plus tard, c'était pendant la guerre 1939-1945, Jean-Louis Gagnon, assagi ou désintoxiqué du marxisme, devenait au Canada l'un des publicistes les plus panachés de la guerre, l'un des plus hautains champions du capitalisme moderne. La sainte Russie étant, il est vrai, notre alliée, l'ex-disciple de Marx se faisait le féal chevalier de la Grande-Bretagne. Et, dans un livre fort vanté, il embouchait l'olifant pour chanter son hymne au nouveau dieu: *Au vent du large*." Lionel Groulx, *Mes mémoires* III: 294-295. The cover of Gagnon's book was designed by Robert LaPalme and was reprinted in LaPalme (1950): 138.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Bouchard ran against Ernest Lapointe, leader of the Québec wing of the federal Liberals in a 1937 by-election, extracting from Lapointe a fateful promise that in the event of war conscription would never be introduced by a Liberal government (which benefited all too easily from the association between the 1917 Conscription crisis and the then Conservative government). Lapointe was released from his promise at his death in 1941, and the ensuing by-election at Québec-East to bring Louis St.-Laurent to Ottawa and to take Lapointe's place found Bouchard once again as candidate. By this time the move towards a conscription referendum was helping to guarantee the isolationist Duplessis's return to power at Québec City in 1944. Duplessis had also recuperated Paul Bouchard, following the closing of *La Nation* in 1939, as the Union nationale's chief publicist. See Chapter Four.

<sup>37</sup> Sources for information on *Le Journal* are Hamelin and Beaulieu, Groulx, op. cit and Gagnon "Le Journal, 1929-1932" in *Idéologies au Canada français 1930-1939*. The newspaper was created and financed by Québec Conservatives at very low ebb in their fortune. Its editor Louis Francoeur would be

impending electoral success of multimillionaire R. B. Bennett for the federal Conservative Party would find an echo in the provincial arena. They expected a similar triumph at the provincial elections under then-leader of the *bleus*, the charismatic demagogue Camilien Houde (1889-1958), who would later be famously interned during the Second World War for advocating resistance to conscription. The paper battled against the evidently more and more corrupt and nepotistic provincial Liberals under Louis-Alexandre Taschereau (1867-1952; premier, 1920-1935) and gained energy from Francoeur's personal support for Maurice Duplessis, leader of the provincial Conservatives after 1933. Although Francoeur stepped down in 1934, continuing to support Duplessis through political and journalistic action, the paper was newly confident as Duplessis steered the conservatives into the alliance (soon seen as unholy) formed in 1935 with the ALN. The group's leader Paul Gouin (1898-1976) was the son of former premier Lomer Gouin. The general election of fall 1935 shook Taschereau's hold on power, and throughout the first half of 1936 the elderly politician faced the powerful invective of Duplessis's group, which successfully stalled the adoption of the financial measures required by the government to run the Province. By early summer 1936, it became clear that Taschereau could not survive; Joseph-Adelard Godbout succeeded him on July 11, but the opposition machinery now marshalled to full effect helped sweep Duplessis to power on August 12.

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very pro-Duplessis at the Conservatives' convention in 1932. Francoeur left in 1936 to enter politics.

*Le Journal* thus became a daily paper on July 26 1936 under the editorship of Edmond Chassé, newly poached from the competition *Événement*.<sup>38</sup> The paper clearly anticipated the rewards attendant on its support of an incoming administration of conservative hue. Nevertheless, such were the prevarications of Québec politics in this time that a semblance of editorial autonomy was preserved, if only to satisfy the mood of a contradictory electorate.

Duplessis was elected on the wave of euphoria that might be expected from the ending of over thirty years of one-party rule. His alliance with the Action Libérale Nationale group was expected to produce policies that would greatly enhance the political and economic autonomy of Québec, notably through the nationalization of the electricity supply. But when Duplessis admitted none of the core ALN members to his first cabinet and ignored much of their programme, he thereby provoked a sense of betrayal that would haunt nationalist politics for a long time.<sup>39</sup> In his memoirs, Lionel Groulx for one attested to this sense of letdown; Québec had been waiting for a saviour, one imagined by Groulx to

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<sup>38</sup> Jean-Louis Gagnon, *Apostasies. Tome I : Les coqs du village* (Montréal, La Presse : 1985) [Hereafter referred to as Gagnon, *Apostasies I*]: 149.

<sup>39</sup> See Robert Comeau, "L'idéologie petite-bourgeoise des indépendantistes de 'La Nation' 1936-1938" in Fernand Dumont, Jean Hamelin and Jean-Paul Montminy, eds. *Idéologies au Canada français, 1930-1939* (Québec : Presses de l'Université Laval, 1978) : 201-214. Comeau characterizes the founders Paul Bouchard, Albert Pelletier, Roger Vézina and Pierre Letarte, all young lawyers, "ex-militants libéraux pour la plupart partageant la même sympathie pour Paul Gouin [leader of the Action libérale nationale]. Paul Bouchard, vraiment l'âme dirigeante du journal, en assurait la direction et l'orientation idéologique. Ce leader autoritaire a toujours voulu regrouper dans un parti politique tous les nationalistes. Ayant échoué dans ses tentatives électorales à la tête de partis autonomistes, il placera son talent d'organisateur au service de l'Union nationale, après avoir vivement combattu Maurice Duplessis.[...] le mouvement de Paul Bouchard, contrairement à ce qu'a pu affirmer Léon Dion, ne peut se comprendre en dehors de la perspective de l'abbé Groulx qui était véritablement l'objet d'un culte de leur part. (Ibid. : 201-202).

have the strong will and sage governance of a Dolfuss, a Mussolini or a Salazar – all models of fascism.<sup>40</sup> Instead, a mere pragmatist had emerged as *Chef*.

For some six to eight months, Gagnon thus worked both at *Le Journal* and at *La Nation*, with no apparent conflict of interest, explicable because the *Journal* articles were unsigned. In September 1936, he welcomed Louis Francoeur, whom Hélène Jobidon had known in Francoeur's time as Secretary of the Opposition, to their home. As Gagnon remembered, Francoeur spoke with conviction of his belief, akin to that of so many nationalists of the time, that parliamentary democracy had no meaning outside of nations formed in the British, Anglo-Saxon tradition. Just such a belief animated the monarchist wing of French politics under the influence of Charles Maurras. It was a driving force behind the ideology of Paul Bouchard and, as we have seen, a prevailing value of Gagnon's. Thus, at the core of the journalistic institution ascendant during Duplessis's first administration was a key group whose ambition was to undo the parliamentary system based on universal suffrage. Yet the concrete actions of Duplessis showed how that parliamentary system, and his own brokerage of its political and economic influence, would do just fine as a means to attain and exercise power. Gagnon himself railed in the pages of *La Nation* against the treacheries perpetuated by the political leadership. At the same time, *La Nation* accompanied its calls for a separate and fascist Québec, established on a medievalizing, corporatist social model, with a massive critical investment in the outcome of the battle between fascism and communism in Europe, particularly in the explosive Spanish Civil War. It transported the climate of violence into its pages by

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<sup>40</sup> See above, note 26.

attacking the supporters of loyalist forces, decrying the presence of communist groups in Canada. Against the backdrop of the rebellion against the Socialist government in Spain, by now an outright civil war, and the advent of the Socialist-led Popular Front to office in France, the Fall of 1936 can only have presented the *Nation* and *Journal* groups with the keenest of dilemmas: a stalemate of latently violent solutions to a number of political impasses.

It is all too easy to understand how the 1930s in Québec were so marked by the pamphleteering spirit shared among Gagnon, Francoeur, their friend Claude-Henri Grignon (Valdombre), Victor Barbeau and, until 1935 at least, Olivar Asselin. In this climate, the capacity for rhetoric was precious – shared in large measure by the mordant Maurice Duplessis. At the same time the place for political speech could easily be contested. The pamphlet, the article – and gradually, the caricature – shared the limited scope for outrageous symbolic action. For the time being, only the most engaged publications would indulge in caricature as this type of action – *La Nation* on the right, Jean-Charles Harvey's weekly *Le Jour*, and *En avant!* and *Clarté*, also weeklies, on the left.<sup>41</sup>

In retrospect, Jean-Louis Gagnon's departure from *La Nation*, and his invitation to LaPalme to come and join him at *Le Journal*, would eventually take a meaning above all

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<sup>41</sup> *Clarté* was a biweekly communist newspaper published between January 1935 and February 1939. Its offices and printing premises were locked down in November 1937 under the Padlock Law *La Presse Québécoise des origines à nos jours* (vol 7): 6-7. *En avant* was a weekly paper published at Saint-Hyacinthe, between January 1937 and December 1939, by T.-D. Bouchard. It was as a militant newspaper for the Liberal Party. Claude-Henri Grignon was its literary director. *La presse québécoise des origines à nos jours* (vol 7): 81.

in the common outcome that editor and caricaturist reached six years later: by the time of the 1942 Conscription crisis, this position was firmly supportive of Canada's full participation in the War, including conscription. While this outcome could not be further from Gagnon's fiercely anti-British, anti-communist, anti-Semitic, separatist, pro-Franco world view in 1936, it served to bring LaPalme to a capacity to laden his caricature with some of the power that had been exemplified by *La Nation*. It may seem churlish to dwell on the change, since any citizen may once be deeply committed to a cause and simply change to another. But the extent of the change in Gagnon between the time of his invitation to LaPalme and the outcome of their joint tenure at Québec City can be measured alongside the changing political situation at Québec City in relation to Ottawa and the nations of Europe. It is a measure of the championed values of the very French culture which Gagnon and LaPalme promoted through the very recourse to caricature. And Gagnon's account of this very "apostasy" documents the impact of a specifically French consciousness that had undergone a similar change. Many far-right figures were also to travel from a position founded in Barrès and Maurras to one that utterly rejected their example.

Since Gagnon served as a governing spirit for LaPalme's work between 1937 and 1939, it is worth dwelling on Gagnon's own evolving position in these years. The first of several turning points that Gagnon described in the first volume of his aptly-titled 1985 memoir, *Les Apostasies*, came with understanding the sheer extent of atrocities committed on both sides in the Spanish Civil War. The growing revulsion specifically levelled against the murderous rebels seeking the overthrow of the democratically elected

Spanish Socialist Government, in the name of the defence of Catholicism, was very difficult for many to accept. In 1985, Gagnon identified the moment when his defence of – or indeed indifference towards – the fascist position in Spain was no longer possible.

The change, it seems, followed Guernica:

Il existait quand même un hebdomadaire français qui échappait à cette maladie de l'esprit qu'est le fascisme. Je ne l'avais pourtant jamais lu, car je n'arrivais pas à voir Maritain, Mauriac, Folliet et Gabriel Marcel en journalistes. Comment imaginer qu'ils allaient s'engager dans le siècle au point de vomir ceux qui, en Espagne, disaient massacrer les républicains pour la plus grande gloire de Dieu? Mais un jour, j'ai acheté *Temps présent* parce qu'à la Une il y avait un billet de François Mauriac sur José Bergamin et les Basques catholiques. Le reste devenait une question d'information. Ironie des choses: un hebdomadaire m'avait ouvert les yeux, et voilà qu'il me conduisait à la lecture des journaux anglais de Montréal et du *New York Times*. Somme toute, les dix mois durant lesquels j'avais collaboré à *La Nation* n'avaient pas été inutiles puisque j'en étais sorti guéri du nationalisme et du fascisme.<sup>42</sup>

“Comment imaginer qu'ils allaient s'engager dans le siècle au point de vomir ceux qui, en Espagne, disaient massacrer les républicains pour la plus grande gloire de Dieu?” The very word *vomir* evokes the spirit of Léon Bloy. Other aspects of this remembrance more overtly evoke specific Catholic alliances, but are troublingly unclear. François Mauriac's first editorial on the front page of *Temps présent* appeared in its first issue, on November 5, 1937.<sup>43</sup> The weekly which printed both Mauriac and Maritain was, however, the

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<sup>42</sup> Gagnon, *Apostasies* I: 130-131.

<sup>43</sup> As Jean Lacouture wrote in his 1980 biography of Mauriac, “*Sept* était un hebdomadaire modeste, simplement défavorable au fascisme et à la guerre. *Temps présent* sera un journal mieux fait, plus riche, plus moderne, activement antifasciste, résolument hostile au franquisme et au nazisme. Une publication où François Mauriac s'engagera beaucoup plus résolument, ne serait-ce qu'en lui donnant l'éditorial hebdomadaire....[The first edition appeared on November 1 1937]. *Temps présent* ne se signalera pas seulement à la haine de ceux qui rêvent d'un pouvoir fort à l'image de celui de Rome, des alliés de Franco. Il saura aussi poser, en avance sur son temps, cette question coloniale qui occupera si fort François Mauriac 15 ans plus tard.” Jean Lacouture, *François Mauriac* (Paris : Editions du Seuil, 1980): 332.

earlier *Sept*, closed in July 1937.<sup>44</sup> According to his biographer, François Mauriac's first awakening to the atrocities being perpetrated by European fascist régimes in the name of the defence of civilisation took place in 1935 when he drafted a response for publication in *Le Figaro*. This note concerned, of all things, a cartoon on Emperor Haile Selassie, at the time of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, by the fabled right-wing French caricaturist Jean Sennep (1894-1982), to whom LaPalme had been compared in 1934.<sup>45</sup> Mauriac's response served to exile him from what his biographer terms "une droite où il s'est jusqu'alors douillettement enmitouflé, dans le confort intellectuel et le conformisme social." Mauriac analysed the cartoon and his own response to it – and then remembered the responsibility to which he was beholden:

Le désert. Au pied d'un cocotier, un écriteau porte cette indication. Palais Royal. Dans les palmes, sont perchés deux singes et le Négus d'Abyssinie. C'est très drôle et il faudrait rire. Mais pas habitude professionnelle, je me mets à la place des gens. Qu'a-t-il pu éveiller, ce dessin, dans l'esprit des Noirs qui l'ont vu – ou qui le verront lorsque le journal de Sennep aura traversé les mers? J'imagine un garçon de couleur, dont le père ou le frère aîné repose depuis 20 ans, quelque part, entre la mer et les Vosges. J'affirme qu'il y a là de quoi susciter dans un coeur simple une haine assez puissante pour remplir une vie. [...] Sennep a mis, dans les pattes du Négus, un journal: L'Humanité.... Et cela donne aussi à réfléchir. Depuis l'affaire Dreyfus, les puissances de désordre et de destruction savent quelle arme redoutable devient entre leurs mains une cause

<sup>44</sup> "[...] les Dominicains avaient créé à Juvisy un centre d'édition catholique, qui devint en 1928 les Éditions du Cerf, et qui fut transféré au boulevard de Latour-Maubourg en 1936. En 1934, *La Vie intellectuelle* et *La Vie spirituelle* furent couronnés, à la demande du Vatican par *Sept* qui devait s'inspirer des formules des hebdomadaires politico-littéraires de la période [...] [la collaboration de] François Mauriac, Étienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain, Pierre-H. Simon, Daniel-Rops, Bernanos, J. Folliet [...] assura à *Sept* une qualité remarquable. Organe catholique, destiné à affirmer la place du christianisme dans la cité, *Sept* traita les sujets les plus brûlants de l'actualité et osa aborder, sans préjugés, les problèmes de l'enseignement libre, du colonialisme, des rapports du capitalisme avec la doctrine chrétienne, du marxisme même. Il fut très vite dénoncé par la Fédération Nationale Catholique et les milieux catholiques de droite, comme un organe "rouge chrétien", pour ne pas avoir rejeté a priori certaines idées de la gauche. Ces accusations trouvèrent de nombreux échos à Rome où ses jugements sur la guerre d'Espagne furent souvent mal accueillis." Closed down by the Church authorities, *Sept*'s last issue appeared on 27 August 1937, and was succeeded by *Temps présent* which absorbed all its lay contributors. See Bellanger et al., eds., *Histoire générale de la presse française* vol III (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1969): 555-556.

<sup>45</sup> See the comparison of LaPalme to Sennep above in Chapter Two: 125.



juste. Et nous, chrétiens, nous devrions nous en souvenir. Mais nous l'avons oublié.<sup>46</sup>

The need to speak up in the face of wilful amnesia or blindness seems to characterize a typical process of awakening in these years. With respect to atrocities perpetrated by Franco's forces and their allies, Mauriac's response, like Bergamin's or even Jacques Maritain's, was often discounted out of hand as propaganda, fabrication, or as null and void in the face of comparable atrocities against members of the Catholic Church. The control of media representation in the late 1930s could be impressive; as André Géraud noted in 1943, some seventy per cent of French readers were never aware of German responsibility for Guernica.<sup>47</sup> Lionel Groulx, in *Mes mémoires*, likewise omitted the entire Spanish conflict, except to recall what he termed the *mouvement franquiste contre les rouges d'Espagne*.<sup>48</sup> The value of pamphleteering speech against this amnesia crosses over to the image, but the ferocity of propaganda caricatures was not yet the key to giving the image a place within the wider realms of recognized political speech in Québec.

All in all, Gagnon's own "awakening" should therefore safely be placed somewhere around the end of 1937 and into the first part of 1938. The evidence he gives us is

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<sup>46</sup> Reprinted in Jean Lacouture, op. cit: 312.

<sup>47</sup> "La grande presse a trompé les Français... Sur 100 Français, 70 n'ont jamais su que les Allemands étaient responsables de Guernica... les faits susceptibles d'éveiller la nation en péril sont étouffés. Mais tout ce qui peut la dresser contre les marxistes, contre l'Angleterre elle-même et ainsi l'orienter vers les dictatures lui est injecté." Pertinax (André Géraud), *Les fossoyeurs* (New York, n.p. 1943) : 125; reprinted in *Histoire générale de la presse française* vol III, op. cit. : 485-6.

<sup>48</sup> Groulx used similar language in reference to "... des amis qui ne comprennent rien à certaines attitudes politiques des catholiques de France qui, lors du mouvement franquiste contre les rouges d'Espagne, par exemple, se scandalisaient des étranges attitudes du journal *Sept* et d'un homme tel que Jacques Maritain, ce dernier prenant presque parti pour les révolutionnaires..." Groulx, *Mes mémoires* III : 112.

somewhat out of sorts with corroborating events. It is unclear that it led to any real change in action on his part – for the moment. The shift in his political affiliation would wait until 1939, until the impending return to power of the Liberals, and following the declaration of war, when neutrality no longer seemed possible; and in the meantime he became more closely involved with the day-to-day running of the *Journal*. In the immediate aftermath of Guernica, in late April 1937, Gagnon was busy welcoming LaPalme with his “Mussolinian eyes.”

At *Le Journal* after June 1937, LaPalme was both contributor and frequent subject. The sense of national accomplishment remained. In announcing a show of forty caricatures at the École des Beaux-arts de Québec (EBAQ) on May 30, *Le Journal* said that the show “esquissera également ce que pourra devenir l’art au Canada, un Art spécifiquement Canadien.”<sup>49</sup> On June 1<sup>st</sup>, *Le Journal* described “Un Salon LaPalme.” “Nos lecteurs seront sans doute charmés d’apprendre que l’artiste LaPalme, dont les caricatures cubistes ajoutent, tous les matins, une note fantaisiste aux événements parfois malheureux de la vie quotidienne.” He had been allowed to participate in the annual Salon of the École des beaux-arts. The event brought LaPalme to the attention of J. A. Chamberland, Gérard Morisset, and Albert Lévesque among other notables.<sup>50</sup>

On June 12, a notice appeared under Jean-Louis Gagnon’s own by-line. “Robert La Palme, caricaturiste au “Journal”, expose, à l’École des Beaux-arts, des têtes fantaisistes enluminées comme des images de légendes modernes.” Thanks to Jean Bruchési, the

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<sup>49</sup> “Une exposition aux beaux-arts.” *Le Journal*, May 30th 1937.

<sup>50</sup> “Ouverture du salon de l’Ecole des Beaux-Arts.” *L’Action catholique*, June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1937.

prolific man of letters newly designated undersecretary of the Province under the Union nationale government (whose earlier *Aux marches de l'Europe* LaPalme would retrospectively have Asselin consign to the rubbish), Gagnon has been able to spend an hour with LaPalme's caricatures. Wrote Gagnon,

[...] nous y trouvons enfin un modernisme de bon aloi. Car, chose formidable! voilà maintenant qu'on permet qu'un artiste hors-série et anti-conformiste accroche ses tableaux aux murs d'une École officielle.... [Gagnon titles a section of the article] Les caricatures synthétiques et impressionnistes de LaPalme. Cet artiste géométral... a réussi ce véritable tour de force : réduire ses trouvailles à un simple graphique tout en conservant la ressemblance photographique d'un honnête dessin bourgeois. On peut affirmer qu'à l'instar de tous les véritables impressionnistes, il s'est d'abord cherché à travers plusieurs maîtres.<sup>51</sup>

Gagnon's sole reproach came from missing the earlier "synthetic" works; he liked the dictatorial Hitler "figé devant un micro, mais combien j'ai regretté de ne pas trouver exposée cette belle évocation du Führer publié dans *L'Ordre...* » (Figures 3-13 and 2-15). Yet Gagnon praised other illuminated heads, "comme des images de légendes modernes [...] Il semble que le monde se transforme et qu'il n'est plus habité que par des personnages de Guignol et les caprices de Robert LaPalme."<sup>52</sup> Indeed, by July of 1937, *La Patrie*, in an article on Minister for Mines Paul Leduc, could call LaPalme "notre caricaturiste national."

His launch at Québec City was certainly a success of some order. On September 29<sup>th</sup>, several papers reported the appointment of LaPalme as librarian of the École des beaux-arts de Québec - by Jean Bruchési. He was also taken on as a monitor for a class given by

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<sup>51</sup> Jean-Louis Gagnon, "Un Salon 1937/ R. La Palme et l'art de la caricature", *Le Journal* (Québec), June 12 1937.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Jean-Paul Lemieux. It is worth remembering that most appointments in public service patronage at Québec City were in the gift of the government; Bruchési like LaPalme was thus under the patronage of the Union nationale administration of Maurice Duplessis.<sup>53</sup> LaPalme's homecoming was certainly solid. Jean-Louis Gagnon remembered the participation of Robert and Nanette LaPalme at the late-night club for political discussion (and, of course, after-hours drinking), gathering energetic personalities of all political stripes to the Old Homestead tavern across from the Château Frontenac. At Christmastime 1938, LaPalme joined historian Gérard Morisset and Jean-Paul Lemieux on the jury for a showcase of children's art organized by (and for) *Le Soleil*. Two years later, he participated in another such jury (rather less artistic and more centred on worthies from civic politics, business and the Church), convened this time by *L'Action catholique* to organize a colouring contest for young people.<sup>54</sup>

On 28 October 1938, Senator Jacob Nicol's *Le Soleil* bought *Le Journal*, a morning paper, and fused it with its own morning paper, *L'Événement*, a stalwart publication founded in 1867.<sup>55</sup> The *Le Soleil* empire had long thrived under the patronage of the Liberal Taschereau administration. But it was too powerful, as the leading daily printed

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<sup>53</sup> Those cultural figures who were given government sinecures were nominally indebted to the ruling Party in control of government, but their fate could take curious twists. Jean-Charles Harvey lost his position as editor of *Le Soleil* following the publication of his novel *Les demi-civilisés*, a ringing condemnation of Québec petit-bourgeois values, in 1934. Nonetheless, given the *Soleil's* proximity to the Liberal administration of Louis-Alexandre Taschereau, a bureaucrat's post was found for Harvey – at the entire discretion of Taschereau himself. Harvey languished until in 1937, French-Canadian friends opposed to the fascist sympathies of Maurice Duplessis introduced Harvey to the English-Canadian leadership of Canadian National railways, who agreed to finance Harvey's left-wing, secularizing *Le Jour*. The story is told in Jean-Louis Gagnon, *Apostasies* I: 91-94, 223.

<sup>54</sup> *L'Action catholique*, December 27<sup>th</sup> 1940, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> See Gagnon, *Apostasies* I: 238-239. The history of *L'Événement* and *l'Événement-Journal* will be found in *La Presse québécoise des origines à nos jours* (vol 2 : 1860-79) : 95-100; that of *Le Journal*, in vol 6 (1920-34) : 191-93.

in the Capital, to be ignored under the new patronage of the Union nationale, which distributed all-important government printing contracts. Where the fusion perplexed many – a Liberal paper swallowing one that was founded to support the Conservatives, and later followed suit with the Union nationale – it was a clever anticipatory move, delivering a single morning paper to exclusive Union nationale control. For as Gagnon later recalled, the purchase was carried out entirely with the tacit approval of Maurice Duplessis; the dispensation of patronage even to the “enemy” proving to be one of the wildest aspects of his control of power.<sup>56</sup> The first issue of *L'Événement-Journal* appeared the day after the merger.<sup>57</sup>

One year later, Duplessis cashed in on his support for the 1938 merger by commandeering the *Événement-Journal*'s editorial position during the 1939 election campaign, between September 25<sup>th</sup> and October 25<sup>th</sup>. A hectoring series of editorials appeared, sharply reminiscent of Jean-Louis Gagnon's and Paul Bouchard's style at *La Nation*. By this time, Bouchard was a propaganda organiser for Duplessis, and had recently appeared at the public rally of September 4<sup>th</sup> at the Marché Maisonneuve to proclaim : “Je suis résolument, énergiquement et carrément opposé à la participation du Canada à la guerre en Europe, parce que je ne veux pas que des milliers de jeunes Canadiens aillent crever au-delà des mers pour sauver la finance judéo-internationale”.<sup>58</sup> In the single month of the election campaign, the newspaper was enriched with a series of

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<sup>56</sup> For the wily accords between Senator Nicol and Maurice Duplessis, see Gagnon, *Apostasies* I: 226-230.

<sup>57</sup> Jean-Louis Gagnon, *Apostasies* I: 226-227.

<sup>58</sup> Conrad Black, *Duplessis* (Toronto : MacLelland and Stewart, 1977) : 336 n 20.

cartoons by Robert LaPalme, which attacked the provincial Liberal leader Adelard Godbout as well as Ernest Lapointe, leader of the Québec wing of the federal Liberal Party and trusted colleague of Prime Minister King. These cartoons were signed “A.” or “Adolf.”

The election campaign went badly for Duplessis and the Union nationale. Following the invasion of Poland by Germany on September 1st, and the declaration of war by Britain and France on September 3rd, Canada followed suit on September 9<sup>th</sup>. Duplessis was out-manoeuvred on two fronts. First, the financial world governed by « St James Street » - the anglophone capitalist élite of Montréal - refused to extend credit to his government without a new electoral mandate. Second, the Liberals understood they could campaign against Duplessis by tarring him with brush of conservative support for conscription in 1917. Jean-Louis Gagnon later recounted another apostasy, a moment definitive for his adherence to Liberal politics and ideals, on September 3rd 1939, after the declaration of the War Measures Act, which included censorship – for which the minister responsible was the Minister of Justice, Ernest Lapointe. The *Événement-Journal*'s campaign against Lapointe, depicted as the true ringleader of the Québec Liberals, made this responsibility for censorship the centrepiece of its campaign against Liberals at Ottawa and at Québec City.

It was indeed the main tenor of LaPalme's cartoons throughout the election campaign. LaPalme later recalled that he accepted twenty-five dollars from the Duplessis régime at this time to draw a caricature against Ernest Lapointe: “Je devais dessiner Lapointe en pot

de chambre.”<sup>59</sup> That LaPalme remembered the chamber-pot image alone nearly sixty years later is perhaps true to the repetitive hectoring quality of his October 1939 cartoons as a whole; the chamber pot is perhaps the most succinct and powerful (Figure 3-14). The cartoons began in the first week of October 1939, heralded by the appearance of small caricature heads of Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and Chamberlain, akin to drop-cap paragraph initials, punctuating the front page make-up as of October 2nd. The first election cartoon appeared on October 3rd on page 4, then the common editorial page for most newspapers, at the top of columns 3 to 5, to the right of the editorial. Ernest Lapointe, the censor, hovers over Adelard Godbout, helping him to excise inconvenient passages from his speech (Figure 3-15). The accompanying editorial linked censorship, communism and Québec. Only Duplessis had properly fought communism; Ernest Lapointe was using censorship to stifle public opinion in Québec; the Liberals were censoring their earlier commitments not to have recourse to conscription; the Liberals have never properly explained their position on communism. Indeed, the editorial lashed out at the Quebec provincial secretary (1936-40) of the Canadian Communist Party, Stanley B. Ryerson. An often-named foe of Gagnon’s in *Nation* days, Ryerson had just pledged his support to the Liberals.

Les communistes appuient les libéraux et ils combattront Maurice Duplessis. Plus de doute. Personne ne pourra nier le fait. Tout s’explique. On sait maintenant pourquoi *L’Événement-Journal* est menacé de suppression par le bureau de la censure (nous ferons demain des révélations à ce sujet) et pourquoi le journal communiste “Clarté” peut écrire ce qu’il veut, se moquant de la censure [...] on sait maintenant pourquoi M. Ernest Lapointe n’a pas fait voter une loi du cadenas pour tout le Canada.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> LaPalme (1997): 82.

<sup>60</sup> “Tout s’explique!” *L’Événement-Journal*, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939: 4.

On Monday October 9th, at centre front page, Lapointe was seen through a keyhole, clipping phrases such as “Au lieu d’aller à l’étranger, nous resterons ici et nous défendrons le Canada que nous aimons!” from a speech given at Lotbinière in 1937 (Figure 3-16). This was a reference to a by-election speech duly given by Lapointe two years earlier, when he promised that conscription would never be enacted by the King administration – a promise made again by Lapointe in the company of Godbout, on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. The initial 1937 promise had been elicited by none other than Paul Bouchard, contesting the same by-election. In 1939, the example of the procedures developed by *La Nation* under Bouchard and Gagnon back in 1936, finally came to directly inform images made by LaPalme. These images were robbed of a good deal of humour, while his line became well-organized but deeply functional.

It is thus difficult to ascertain if and when this informing was directly responsible for the stage-setting of LaPalme’s images or simply for their tenor. There were certainly variations in the levels of his humour. On October 10, a hapless Godbout was seen peering out from the rim at the back of a flying handbag being piloted by Mackenzie King – a reference fully explained by the cartoon’s title, *La chasse-galerie* (Figure 3-17). The choice was odd. It was an homage to the tale written in 1891 by Honoré Beaugrand (1848-1906), the *rouge*-liberal freemason former mayor of Montréal and publisher of *La Patrie*. In the tale, men working in the back woods of Québec make a pact with the Devil to be able to visit their loved ones at an evening dance in Montreal; they cross the great distances thanks to a flying canoe captained by the Devil. The Godbout-King cartoon was thus also a tribute to LaPalme’s predecessor Henri Julien (1852-1908), who had



memorably illustrated the tale. The humour works on the surface; we understand that Godbout is merely led by King, or by Lapointe; however the original tale is also about successful defiance, for the canoe's passengers eventually undo the devil and break their pact. If intended to show Godbout's alliance to King, it ought to be read as his ability to undo and transcend filiation to Ottawa – a capacity to outsmart the devil. Such is not the message of the accompanying subtexts; it may be wondered if LaPalme, like Julien before him, understood how to speak a second discourse tacitly through his commissioned work (despite its theme).

A rather less subtle version of this theme was presented on the front page of the Wednesday October 18<sup>th</sup> edition, in which a rotund Lapointe yanks a tiny Godbout behind him. (Figure 3-18). LaPalme's drawing continues in a functional key; we are a long way from the fantasist geometries of his portrait caricature; and while some liberties are taken, normally around the arm- and leg-creases of clothes, for the most part his line is deliberate and curvilinear, although hardly sensuous. On page 4 is the image remembered by LaPalme six decades later along with the \$25 payment from Duplessis – a corroboration of the close link between LaPalme and the *Événement-Journal* through electioneering expenses. The head of Lapointe appears as a chamber pot beside a pair of scissors, "King cutters." The caption reads: "Par la censure, M. Ernest Lapointe empêche les orateurs de l'Union nationale de sortir les arguments qu'ils ont dans la tête. Voici ce qui lui arriverait à lui-même, si on lui faisait subir le même traitement."

The tit-for-tat tone of this caption, reminiscent of schoolyard revenges, is of a piece with the newspaper's election discourses: Lapointe must be pro-communist, he hasn't passed a padlock law for the rest of Canada; they (our opponents) won't let us speak; we have revelations we will give you tomorrow. Such were the hallmarks of Paul Bouchard's *La Nation* both before and following Gagnon's departure – often to the point of a virulent paranoia. The captions here and in the remaining cartoons are heavy-handed and belaboured. They help the reader to decipher allegorical references that are already explicit, as in “Méfiez-vous des bananes pourries” of Friday, October 20th (Figure 3-19). Nonetheless, a brilliant *coup de grâce* was reserved for the cartoon of the following day – an entirely blank panel, implying that a drawing by “Adolf” had been directly censored by the censorship bureau – by Lapointe himself – with but three days remaining in the election campaign (Figure 3-20).

The Lapointe series for *L'Événement-Journal* was a precursor in LaPalme's work, his first attempt at the creation of a regular character. The time to develop the character was almost nil, and LaPalme's graphic means did not yet give him a way to invest the character with any personality. It was as yet simply a stance for an election position, an almost-daily redeployed design intended to provide a sustained running commentary. It posed the challenge of renewal, a challenge not yet fully met by the artist still more at home with the brilliant reduction of likeness than with the deployment of a fully-fledged body. The Lapointe cartoons point to some familiarity with and study of strip cartoons, notably *The Little King* by Otto Soglow. We do not know if the disappearance of attribute and likeness for the censor Lapointe into a “censored” blank image was

LaPalme's, or his newspaper's, master-stroke. At any rate, the attack strategy was hugely ineffective or irrelevant; for all its railing, *L'Événement-Journal* could do nothing to stem the overwhelming defeat handed to the Union nationale on October 25th. Like the anti-Liberal cartoons penned in 1899 by Henri Julien for the *Montréal Star*, they perhaps had, if anything, the opposite effect. LaPalme had certainly exhausted his immediate purpose.

The day after Godbout's victory, Jean-Louis Gagnon was offered the editorship of the *Événement-Journal* by Senator Nicol. The federal Liberals wanted to see one Québec City paper clearly allied to the joint federal and provincial Liberal positions in the prosecution of war. Although itself a long-time pro-Liberal paper, Nicol's mass-market *Soleil* could not afford the loss in circulation and income that would follow on the adoption of such a policy.<sup>61</sup> However, LaPalme here exited the *Soleil* universe. Although he too would eventually participate in the war effort and indeed follow Jean-Louis Gagnon into the Liberal administration of wartime and post-War Canada, LaPalme, or "Adolf", disappeared from the pages of Gagnon's *Événement-Journal* immediately following the election. In early December, dismissed from his post at the École des beaux-arts de Québec, he may have suffered from the fallout of a change in patronage as the government reorganized the bureaucracy. Indeed it may be that his pseudonymous activities had been revealed, making his position untenable for the school's director Jean-Baptiste Soucy.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Gagnon, *Apostasies* I.: 238.

<sup>62</sup> The exact date of dismissal is given in LaPalme (1997) p: 92-93. LaPalme explains that he now knows that his previous contention, published in 1988, that he was dismissed following his involvement with the Première exposition des indépendants of 1941, could not be right.

By year's end, however, the resilient LaPalme appeared on a front page again, and this time under his own signature, at *L'Action catholique*, with a cartoon supporting the first wartime government of France under Edouard Daladier. Early in 1940, LaPalme was hired to give drawing classes by Adrien Pouliot, recently-appointed dean of the Faculté des sciences at Université Laval, who was instrumental in refashioning the image and the practices of the university for the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>63</sup> By February 1940 LaPalme had thrown himself into designing sets for the Laval student theatrical revue *Carabinades*. Presented at Théâtre Capitol, the show prefigured his later involvement with Gratien Gélinas's *Fridolinons* in 1945. A *carabinades* self-portrait appeared in *Hebdo-Laval* of February 1940 (Figure 3-21). In a newspaper interview given in early 1940, LaPalme declared himself to quite happily have quit the bureaucrat's lot, being anxious to resume his work as a caricaturist. This wish was granted when his work began to appear regularly in *L'Action catholique* by the late summer of 1940.

### 2.3. Robert LaPalme and *L'Action catholique*

LaPalme's work for this paper saw the transition between his portrait work and his later political graphic satire, both in terms of content and form – with more and more political allegories helping to define the settings and narrative functions of his overall fictive cartoon space, and with a gradual move towards a far more sensuous style. From the Fall of 1940, well into the full phase of the total-war conflict that followed on the early, so-called “Phony War” period, LaPalme's cartoons appeared once or twice a week and, by returning so frequently to certain subjects, allowed him to explore variations that instilled

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<sup>63</sup> See Danielle Ouellet, *Adrien Pouliot : un homme en avance sur son temps* (Montréal : Boréal, 1986).

the beginnings of psychological dramatization into facial and physiognomic depiction. The faint beginnings of societal graphic satire emerged alongside invectives against the Axis leaders or celebrations of the Allied heroes. It would take his entire residency at *L'Action catholique* to fully develop the implications of these changes. Along the way, a great deal of commercial publicity work in the *Action catholique* pages, for Laurentian motors and the Power Electricity Company, allowed him to refine the sense of flair in his transitional style.

His editor-in-chief at *L'Action catholique* was Eugène L'Heureux, who had joined the newspaper in 1931 following twelve years with the *Progrès du Saguenay*. From the outset, L'Heureux defended a fiercely anti-capitalist, corporatist position in keeping with the Action Libérale Nationale's critique of the electricity trust. Although thereby firmly against the Liberals and disposed to give Maurice Duplessis' Union nationale the benefit of the doubt, L'Heureux retained a rather more purist position. He became editor of *L'Action catholique* in 1939.<sup>64</sup>

In leaving the *Le Soleil* group and landing at *L'Action catholique*, LaPalme closed a circle begun in 1937 at Ottawa's *Le Droit*. He returned to the world of the independent, clerically-dependent *bonne presse*. In 1934, Lucien Parizeau had mordantly observed in *L'Ordre*: "Le catholique qui trouve son aliment spirituel dans l'Action catholique de Québec, journal qui humilierait un néophyte du Congo, est prêt à tout croire... Eugène

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<sup>64</sup> Jones, *L'idéologie de l'Action catholique*: 23.

l'Heureux profite donc de l'ignorance dans laquelle il entretient ses lecteurs".<sup>65</sup> By

LaPalme's later admission, this tenure proved to be one of the least sympathetic of his assignments.

Là, j'avais affaire à de sombres malades. La rédaction de *L'Action catholique* surveillait les lignes des vêtements de mes personnages pour voir si on ne pouvait pas y percevoir un côté sexuel! Elle voyait du cul partout. C'est effrayant comme il faut avoir l'esprit tordu pour aller jusque-là. Nous vivions dans un monde de curés stupides.<sup>66</sup>

Just the same, this newspaper had endowed itself with all the regular mass-market trappings - international news coverage, sports and women's pages – and was at the height of its influence, enjoying its highest circulation, second only to *La Presse* and ahead of Jacob Nicol's *Le Soleil*.<sup>67</sup> As an independent journal, it had steered its readership through the fairly tumultuous first Duplessis administration and was, by 1939, affiliated only to the positions of the clergy in its critique of the newly-elected Liberal administration of Adélard Godbout. LaPalme's move to this paper came at a juncture that would prove decisive for the clerical worldview. For after the outbreak of war, the pastoral letters of Cardinal Villeneuve demonstrated an alignment with the requirements of the Canadian government and support for the war effort, and *L'Action catholique* followed suit, although it was at first vigorously and preventatively anti-conscriptionist, in the name of "national unity".<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *L'Ordre*, July 7<sup>th</sup> 1934: 1, reprinted in *Idéologies au Canada français 1930-39*: 194.

<sup>66</sup> LaPalme 1997: 46.

<sup>67</sup> Jones, op. cit.

<sup>68</sup> See for example, *Le Catholique devant la guerre : textes des treize causeries données sous cette rubrique à Radio-Canada en l'année 1943* (n.p.:1943), also including texts by Jacques Maritain and Jean Bruchési; "Paroles mémorables de deux Canadiens-français éminents: Extraits d'un discours prononcé à Toronto le 17 avril 1941" in *Revue du Québec* (Montréal) Vol. 6, no 1 (1941): 15.

Perhaps because of its autonomous and clearly ideological position, *L'Action catholique* brought LaPalme to create the first of his regular political cartoons, marked by emblematic and allegorically organized graphic satire. At the same time, LaPalme definitively abandoned the geometric-abstract style which had pervaded his work since 1933. Although he attributed this change to the passing inspiration of a publicity for a brand of rum,<sup>69</sup> there is reason to acknowledge the impact in these years of the New-Zealand born artist David Low (1891-1963), working at London's *Evening Standard* for Lord Beaverbrook since 1927, and at the *New Statesman and Nation*. Canadian readers enjoyed Low's drawings throughout the 1930s in imported British papers and through reprints in American journals such as *The Nation*. Low's influence was at its pinnacle in the years spanning the Second World War, from its stirrings to its aftermath, as evidenced in a hugely successful run of publications from 1938 through 1946 that provided readers with his satiric epic history in the making<sup>70</sup>. As we will see in the next chapter, Low's work, because of its emblematic status as a morale-booster in Britain, was circulated by the National Gallery of Canada as part a government-sponsored propaganda effort in 1939-42. The sensuous linearity that now became LaPalme's trademark appeared to owe something to Low's achievement, if only in its conveyance of the swift and sure grasp of physiognomies and composition of graphic masses and fictive spaces. LaPalme retained a distinctive signature that derived from what had been termed his "cubist" approach, criss-

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<sup>69</sup> "C'est une publicité d'une marque de rhum réalisée à partir de lignes ondulantes qui a déclenché en moi, un jour, un nouveau ressort créateur. Cette publicité m'a inspiré ces lignes dansantes et joyeuses qui font qu'aujourd'hui, du premier coup d'œil, on reconnaît un LaPalme, même quand il n'est pas signé. Un critique a qualifié le style que créaient ces lignes de spermatique..." LaPalme (1997) : 109.

<sup>70</sup> *Low Again* (1938), *A Cartoon History of Our Times* (with Q. Howe) (1939), *Europe Since Versailles* (1940), *Europe at War* (1941), *Low's War Cartoons* (1941), *Low on the War* (1941), *The World at War* (1941), *British Cartoonists, Caricaturists and Comic Artists* (1942), *Years of Wrath* (1946).

crossing descriptive lines out and away from the implicit forms they connoted, only to connote them through inference; LaPalme developed a sensual application of this principle so that each cartoon became a miniature mural. Above all, LaPalme's distinctive, if evolving style, was patiently affirming itself as an autonomous voice of comment.

Key to this development was the gradual distancing LaPalme undertook towards the newspaper's reliance on images as properly instructional for its Catholic readership. The position of the editorial page cartoon was shared with a feature which, overtly emblematic, made no claim to being a satirical cartoon. It explained the news through simple allegories, and said that it was doing so through its title : *L'actualité par l'image*, as exemplified by LaPalme's colleagues René Houde and G. Marcoux; Houde's September 1940 invocation of the American resistance to Japanese war aims is fairly typical, and redolent of an acquaintance with the functioning of David Low's work (Figure 3-22). While this title somehow presumably distinguished its accompanying images from the photographs which elsewhere denoted the Actualité of the world – and *L'Action catholique* was very well-illustrated in this respect – its belabouring self-signifying at first might be thought of in terms of the use of the image made by *L'Événement-Journal* and, before it, *La Nation*. No trace of irony spoils its functioning. The problem of irony was certainly acute at this time. In *La Revue moderne*, Louis Francoeur, the former *Le Journal* editor and by now the revered host of Radio-Canada's flagship programme on world affairs *La situation ce soir*, spoke of the irony-shaped hole at the centre of Québec's contemporary culture. With his own residual stance after



decades of sharp polemical invective and parody sustaining his bittersweet reflections – a quality that endeared him to his listeners as well – Francoeur hit out at censorships of all kinds in his 1939 *Revue moderne* columns, “Dégonflages.”

S’il est un pays de l’univers civilisé où le ridicule ne tue pas, c’est le nôtre. Comme le conformisme reste, dans tous les domaines, le premier critère de l’opinion courante, quiconque ne se résigne pas à marcher dans la vase tiède se singularise forcément. [...]

L’esprit français nous a quittés depuis trente ans, au moins. Cette partie de notre élite qui devrait être la plus française affiche les défauts mêmes dont les vrais Français alimentent leur théâtre et leur chanson. Le sens de la blague, de la caricature, de la satire est complètement disparu de nos rives.<sup>71</sup>

What’s worse, said Francoeur, Québec society had become steeped in the cliché – thanks in part to the classical religious schooling of every politician who, often a former lawyer, was always equipped with a battery of substitutes for original thinking – none of which were deployed with anything but the most stifling sincerity:

De ce pauvre magasin d’accessoires pour mélos itinérants et purotins, on se sert constamment, sans jamais hésiter, sans jamais sourire. Nos politiciens et leur vocabulaire ne s’embarrassent ni de nuance ni d’ironie, si nécessaires pourtant à prévenir les débordements de l’ineptie et le flux de la sottise parlée.<sup>72</sup>

At *L’Action catholique*, LaPalme’s challenge was to negotiate a position beyond the commissioned cartoon and to find just that ironic tone which could transcend – indeed, use to effect – the language of obviousness. One of his strategies seems to have been to work at refining the composition and presentation of his subjects and to distinguish his work from that of two fellow artists on the same paper, Houde and G. Marcoux. LaPalme enjoyed the distinction of having his cartoons placed on the front page, whereas Houde’s

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<sup>71</sup> Louis Francoeur, “Dégonflages. Nos maîtres les censeurs”, in *La Revue moderne*, mai 1939 : 16.

<sup>72</sup> Louis Francoeur, “Dégonflages. Une politique de mots”, in *La Revue moderne*, septembre 1939 : 23.

and Marcoux's always appeared on the editorial page. LaPalme's drawings were immediate comments on the extraordinary headlines which, day after day, reported the astonishing progress of the European war. For the most part, LaPalme's drawings concern the war and exercise themselves at distinctive and dynamic graphic organisation of space, in which delineation is harnessed to an energetic series of criss-crossing directions. Forms are kept whole; space is symbolic, but gaining in referentiality so that verifiable settings are proposed when necessary – many images concerning battles in streets and hand-to-hand combat. To be sure, they share in the spirit of propaganda which marked a huge portion of any wartime cartooning. Yet exceptions abound. A rare depiction of politics at home came on January 10, 1941, in a cartoon inspired by the recently tabled Sirois report recommending greater federal centralization of powers previously regarded as exclusively provincial in jurisdiction. LaPalme's "Où va-t-on" (Figure 3-23) reprised an image from the immensely popular 1940 Walt Disney animated film *Pinocchio*, showing "Rapportus" and "Federus" inveigling "Provincio" to come down the alley with them, where the butcher "Centralisation" is waiting. "Ferme tes yeux, petit, et suis-moi," says Rapportus. The battle over provincial autonomy in the face of wartime federal centralization was displaced onto another register of current popular visual culture, and onto the realm of children's imagery. This was one of the first of LaPalme's graphic satires to attempt a multi-layered functioning within contemporary regimes of illustration, effectively a cartoon about another type of cartoon. The explanatory legends of the *Événement-Journal* drawings were gone, and both title and subtitle worked at teasing out meaning through the drawn image.

On March 1st, LaPalme's tone was more fiercely propagandistic (Figure 3-24). In Indochina, Japan knifes "Domination française" in the back, while Thailand looks on ready to join in with a machete; "À L'est, rien de nouveau!" the subtitle declares, and indeed the physiognomic representations are entirely in keeping with stereotypes. LaPalme's line was just beginning to loosen, the brush swiftly undulating in description of the protagonist's bodies. These characteristics were also evident in a February 2 depiction of Pierre Laval (Figure 3-25), then a former minister of Vichy France (we will deal with the relationship between Vichy France and Québec more specifically in the next chapter). A drawing of Adolf Hitler's head, looking well and truly car-sick, for a Laurentides automobiles advertisement on April 4<sup>th</sup> (Figure 3-26). This last drawing in particular was one of the fullest precursors of the style LaPalme would resolutely use as of 1943 in his drawings of Maurice Duplessis for *Le Canada*., and is eerily prescient in this respect (see figure 3-2, above), insofar as its agglomeration of closely associated but not necessarily connected undulating lines is allied to the depiction of a psychological state. Hitler had for several years occupied an iconic position in daily visual culture, one which LaPalme would duplicate for Duplessis. On the other hand, an April 5th image, "Là où certains saluts se rencontrent", subtitled "Aujourd'hui comme il y a deux mille ans," contrasted the raised hands and fists of 20th century political sloganeering to the crossed hands of Christ in the Passion. This Easter message reverted to a rather more restrained approach to line more closely allied to the methods of David Low (Figure 3-27).

LaPalme afforded himself a freer hand again in the April 25th depiction, reminiscent of his 1930s portrait caricatures in its simple perspicacity, of Père Marie-Alain Couturier (Figure 4-1). Couturier selected the works in the *Exposition des Indépendants* that LaPalme brought to Québec City under the auspices of the Galerie municipale de Québec, of which he was founding director. The full story of the Galerie municipale belongs to the next chapter, for it is closely bound up with LaPalme's participation in Canada's wartime efforts. Nevertheless, it marks a simultaneous development both in LaPalme's style and in his status among leading Québec artists such as Paul-Émile Borduas, John Lyman and Alfred Pellán. LaPalme set a claim to a very different position for himself, political cartoonist or caricaturist: he was an artist among his peers, a graphic satirist at the forefront of his own chosen medium, and at the same time a keen student of the exhibition as medium. The project also occasioned a new distinction: reference in his work to his own activities. The day after Père Couturier's lecture, the *Action catholique* front page bore LaPalme's follow-up depiction of a scene at the same exhibition's first night view (Figure 4-2). He had now begun to insert his own initiatives into the subject matter of his cartoons, addressing his very status as instigator in the artistic milieu of Québec City. As we will see, he financed this exhibition himself, paying for the printing of invitations at *L'Action catholique*'s presses. The realm of journalistic imagery, so suffused with photographs, representations of current events, films, celebrities and more, with comic strips and illustrated advertising, often borrowing vocabularies from film and theatre (or even cartoons) and their addressing of space, made newspapers – *L'Action catholique* leader among them – into daily festivals of leaky regimes of visual codes and imagery. For example, on May 31st, a Canadian Victory Bonds advertisement presented

two children praying before bed, with the headline “Si je dois mourir cette nuit” - a direct reference to the caption of that year’s Pulitzer-Prize winning cartoon, showing a child in a bombed London house making the very same prayer (“If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take”), known and used then by generations of children in the English-speaking world. The status of the cartoonist, in the wake of Low’s renown and through the recognition of the art form by distinguished prizes, was on the increase.

LaPalme had the incentive to make his own claim to an autonomous position as an author within the space of his commissioning newspaper. LaPalme, present in both editorial visual comment and commercially commissioned images designed to sell products, thus began to gingerly delve into the different sectors of the visual environment of the paper.

His cartoons appeared with more frequent regularity throughout the year, chiefly on Wednesdays and Saturdays and always on the front page. LaPalme’s situation would change definitively along with that of *L’Action catholique* as 1941 gave way to 1942. The first reason was the widely mourned death of Ernest Lapointe in late November 1941.

Robbing Prime Minister King of his trusted and beloved friend, death also spared Lapointe and the Liberal Party from a key aspect of the encroaching reckoning around conscription: since Lapointe had vowed never to sit in a government that brought in conscription, his death was a first release that effectively allowed the government an exit from the pledge that Lapointe had made in 1937, and that the government had used to help support Adelard Godbout in 1939. In 1942, it set about organizing a plebiscite asking Canadians to formalise this release. Since Cardinal Villeneuve felt duty-bound to support the government in all its needs regardless of their reception by Québec’s public opinion, the Church – and its chief organ, *L’Action catholique* – had no option but to

support this position as well. At the same time, Robert LaPalme published a cartoon, widely reprinted, showing the impending US storm making its way to barbarians Hitler and Mussolini (Figure 4-4). This presaged by some months the second major event to determine the course of war at year's end, namely the entry of the United States into the war following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7. The definitive entry of the US immediately catalyzed the public opinion carefully prepared through efforts of the British Information Services which, since the war's inception, had conducted an unceasing public relations campaign in North America. The circulation of British and world-wide English-speaking cultural exhibitions was a key aspect of this strategy. In 1942, LaPalme's US storm cartoon made its way into the travelling exhibition of *War Cartoons and Caricatures of the British Commonwealth* organized by the National Gallery of Canada. It travelled not to the Musée de la Province de Québec - but LaPalme's Galerie municipale de Québec.<sup>73</sup>

Exhibitions resumed and strengthened their key role in LaPalme's furthering of his reputation, from the Théâtre Stella exhibition of late 1933 which brought him to the attention of Olivar Asselin, through the periodic showcases of his work at venues such as Eaton's in Montréal, or the Salon of the École des Beaux-arts de Québec on his arrival in Québec City in 1937. After the end of his years as daily cartoonist in 1962, LaPalme would be overwhelmingly devoted to the cause of the caricature exhibition through his stewardship of the Salon international de la caricature (1967-1988). It can be argued that LaPalme's promotion of caricature and graphic satire as emblems of the values of

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<sup>73</sup> This exhibition is covered in depth in Chapter Four.

freedom of speech, emblematic of the societies which had allied themselves to defeat totalitarianism before, during and after the Second World War, had specific roots in the experiences of the Galerie municipale de Québec, in LaPalme's position at *L'Action catholique*, and in his alignment with the wider media structures of international wartime cultural dissemination. Here, LaPalme's awareness of the exhibition as a distinct medium was fused with tried and true understanding of the propaganda value and purpose of images, a value which could be emphasized or ironically skirted, depending on the latitude afforded by the newspaper – or, indeed, claimed by the artist.

LaPalme's career had progressed to a point where it was possible to re-define the very purpose of caricature for himself. In the final section of this chapter, we review the positions he had staked out publicly over the first decade of his career, to frame the conception which will inform the overtly anti-Duplessis work that he will contribute from 1943 to 1959 at *Le Canada* and then *Le Devoir*.

### **3. LaPalme's caricature, 1937 – 1941: evolving theoretical foundations and critical reception**

We saw the critical field for caricature take shape between 1933 to 1935, under the impact of Robert LaPalme's celebrity portrait caricatures. The language of critical reception addressed itself to establishing the very vocabularies necessary to attempt definitions of caricature. The formal distinction achieved by the artist and the capacity for virtuoso achievements of likeness predominated; comparisons to other leading caricaturists – from abroad, Sennep, Covarrubias; at home, Bourgeois or Lemay – were

made without distinguishing between celebrity portraiture (Covarrubias, Lemay) and political cartooning or graphic satire (Sennep, Bourgeois). LaPalme's use of dynamic design elements redolent of contemporary graphic design and visual styles called into question the confusion surrounding such terms as impressionist, cubist, and expressionist. To seize the quick of your subject, to capture the subject's foibles without attack – to attain a certain ironic reserve – was the utmost goal in this system.

On his return to Canada in 1937, the first articles to assess LaPalme's progress make note of the distance travelled in the previous two years. At Ottawa, while LaPalme was at *Le Droit*, the paper's journalist Gaetan Major noted that a preoccupation with caricature as a branch of portraiture, one that might be humorous, had prevailed in history: "la caricature, ne visant qu'à défigurer pour rendre drôle tout en conservant les traits caractéristiques, n'était après tout qu'un sous-produit du portrait, et par conséquent un art intermédiaire et inférieur," even though the likes of Da Vinci and Tiepolo used it. "Mais il appartenait aux modernes d'ériger définitivement la caricature en un art défini, distinct, avec ses exigences et sa technique particulières." Provoking laughter was no longer the chief ambition of the caricature. When we saw LaPalme's work at Editions Levesque in 1933, he attracted attention "par le synthétique de ses dessins, par leur originalité puissante." Then came the work for *L'Ordre*; and from New York he returned with the improvement of having added bodies to his heads, "Un corps dont l'attitude explique et complète l'impression:

[...] plus de perfection dans le fini, un dessin plus achevé, une symétrie plus balancée. À côté des traits physiques eux-mêmes, ses dessins cherchent à suggérer la nature abstraite, les idées de force, de volonté, d'intelligence, d'élégance... À



mon avis on ne peut lui comparer au Canada qu'un seul autre artiste pour l'originalité de la forme : Marc-Aurèle Fortin. Même Henri Julien, ce maître dessinateur, n'a pas cette originalité puissante qui fait qu'une œuvre de Fortin ou de LaPalme ressort au milieu des autres.

This was that rare thing, an innovation : "il n'est pas arrivé souvent qu'un artiste canadien soit innovateur dans un art quelconque."<sup>74</sup>

This innovation was explored more fully in the April 4, 1937 edition of *L'Unité* - an extreme right wing newspaper – in one of the "Portraits de jeunes" by Arthur Prévost.<sup>75</sup>

In "Un que les Etats-Unis nous a enlevé : Robert LaPalme," Prévost reminds us that before leaving for the US,

LaPalme inaugura une nouvelle forme de caricature. À l'aide d'un nombre très restreint de lignes droites et de lignes courbes 'Robert l'ironique' sait vous servir une figure qui a la propriété d'être plus ressemblante qu'un portrait. Il ne dessine pas seulement les traits de la figure, mais sait y joindre très discrètement la portraiture des qualités et des travers du modèle qu'il cherche et réussit à nous faire comprendre.

This statement resembled the warnings, often repeated in this period, against hermeticism in art; LaPalme would subscribe to it himself to a certain degree, throughout his career.

As a close friend of Pellán's and, as we shall see in the next chapter, closely connected to him stylistically, LaPalme would not follow to the extremes of automatism that would

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<sup>74</sup> Gaétan Major, "Billet/Robert La Palme/ Caricaturiste" *Le Droit*, Ottawa March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1937.

<sup>75</sup> "Le genre d'art qu'il a créé au Canada lui permet d'exposer presque partout; pourtant il n'a exposé qu'une seule fois et un nombre très minime de ses œuvres au 'Foyer du Théâtre Stella' il y a quelques trois ans. Nous n'avons aucune boîte respectable où il pourrait, avec nos autres caricaturistes, dévoiler au public le fruit de son imagination et de son observation.... Inutile de demander un salon permanent pour les œuvres de nos peintres, de nos dessinateurs et de nos sculpteurs. Nous n'avons que le quai du terminus des tramways pour exhiber un travail commercial qui voudrait être attrayant et artistique... (has come back to Ottawa) où avec sa gentille épouse, artiste comme lui, il prépare pour son fils et nos futurs artistes un terrain où ces derniers seront plus appréciés que leurs pères. Du moins, nous l'espérons." *L'Unité*, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

shortly emerge from the studio of Borduas, another member of the Indépendants group he welcomed and befriended in 1941.

Later the same month, LaPalme's friend and erstwhile collaborator at *L'Ordre*, René Chicoine, elicited the autographic and personalist nature of the caricaturist's work :

la peinture, la sculpture, permettent une traduction plus nuancée que la caricature, donc plus complexe et moins facilement déchiffrable. ... La caricature... nous livre son auteur. Il n'y peut mettre que ce qu'il y a de plus actuel, le reste étant impitoyablement sacrifié, faute de place. Il se livre d'autant plus tout d'une pièce que son art est un des plus subjectifs qui soient, la marge étant obligatoirement très grande entre les modèles et leur figuration. On pourrait dire que LaPalme se prolonge dans ses caricatures... La Palme a évolué... Je me souviens qu'au temps de *L'Ordre*, les personnages devaient s'adapter à sa formule. Quand ça s'arrangeait, le truc était épatant, quand ça ne s'arrangeait pas, le truc était raté.

Chicoine also encouraged LaPalme to find humour elsewhere: "J'aurais aimé aussi voir quelques scènes de genre: scènes de rue, de cinéma, de restaurant, de tram de que sais-je? Le comique, mon cher La Palme, est-ce que ça existe seulement dans les gueules?"<sup>76</sup>

At Québec City on February 4, 1938, Robert LaPalme delivered a lecture in which he summed up his understanding of his own practice and of his artistic and theoretical antecedents. "La caricature est un art, elle représente un style, mais à condition qu'elle soit spontanée et qu'il y ait de l'unité dans sa déformation." He enumerated the members of the fraternity: in France, Herman Paul, Abel Faivre, Gus Bofa; in England, David Low; no-one in US or Canada. When after the Great War, the elderly Forain was resting on his laurels, "C'est alors que Picasso, qu'on avait un moment oublié, bondit, la paix

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<sup>76</sup> *La Province*, 17<sup>th</sup> April 1937. This newspaper belonged to Paul Gouin, ousted by Duplessis in 1936.

venue, de toute sa renommée et vient troubler les arts endormis dans l'académisme." The present masters were Sennep, Roger Roy, Rivera and Covarrubias. "La caricature," LaPalme quoted the film writer Carlo Rim, "est la soeur qui a mal tourné de la peinture; André Maurois l'a qualifié d'art."

On définit souvent la caricature l'art de faire rire par le dessin. Elle vous place tout d'abord devant un phénomène d'ordre psychologique très complexe: le rire. Le Rire a sa source dans l'éternel duel qui oppose le bien et le mal. Le mal est négatif et n'existe qu'en fonction du bien ... En considérant la cause finale, il n'est, comme dit Gilson, qu'une simple privation d'ordre dans la disposition des moyens en vue de leur fin. [...] La caricature obéit à une technique particulière, elle s'appuie sur une observation impitoyable, c'est un art essentiellement populaire qui ne saurait admettre l'hermétisme. Le caricaturiste exagère certains traits caractéristiques de son modèle, soit dans le visage, soit dans le geste sa tenue, exactement comme Molière choisissait quelque défaut de ses personnages. La ressemblance tient du trait même exagéré: mais la caricature n'est réussie qu'en autant que l'âme trahie par le masque se lève à cette combinaison d'art et de psychologie que l'artiste saura y mettre.<sup>77</sup>

The references to contemporary visual culture and to the history of caricature were allied with present-day aesthetics – the reference to the Thomist Etienne Gilson furnishing a tantalising pendant to the later involvement with Père Couturier in the espousal of a modernist aesthetic credo. Since Québec's aesthetics and politics were also marked by the works of personalists such as Jacques Maritain in this period, an influence renewed during wartime, we can begin to describe the development of a particularly rich philosophical underpinning to LaPalme's conception of his work. The reference to a foundation of laughter in the opposition of good and evil was, furthermore, connected (at least in the history of ideas) to conceptions of laughter that could be traced from

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<sup>77</sup> The impact of Etienne Gilson's Thomist aesthetics has yet to be measured in relationship to Québec art of the 1930s. Gilson was certainly present for Québec and Canada before and after the war. He prefaced Jean Bruchésis's *Canada : réalités d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (Montréal : les Editions Variétés, Dussault et Péladeau, 1948). In 1925, he was one of the founders of the Institute of medieval studies at the University of Toronto, granted Pontifical status in 1939.

Baudelaire through Léon Bloy, a lineage all the more potent given the importance of Bloy to the generations of Asselin, Valdombre and Louis Francoeur, and the pervasive influence of Baudelaire in modernist Québec poetry and literary theory since the First World War. Indeed, one of LaPalme's first postwar projects would be a cover design for a volume on Baudelaire published by Lucien Parizeau. LaPalme would, however, materialize the triad of laughter, good and evil most productively in the years 1943 to 1959, when he made Maurice Duplessis the outstanding subject of his work.

### 3.1. The *portée* of political discourse

By the 1950s, Maurice Duplessis effectively seemed to give the tone for political invective, for he used it so much himself – his witty, often cruel aphorisms percolating into a caricatural process. Nevertheless, we have already seen how much the recourse to mordant wit was problematic throughout Québec political life, even among those who promoted a worldview in which the caricatural, the ironic, would have no place, and among those for whom it was a staple of the political diet. Hence Olivar Asselin's diatribe against *L'Action catholique*, in *L'Ordre*: "Il y a longtemps que votre exploitation éhontée et toute matérielle d'un catholicisme de bedeaux et de maîtresses d'écoles porteuses du 'diplôme élémentaire du Bureau central des examinateurs' nous a déterminés à vous taper dessus,"<sup>78</sup> following Lucien Parizeau's dictum, already cited: "...Eugène l'Heureux profite donc de l'ignorance dans laquelle il entretient ses lecteurs."

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<sup>78</sup> *L'Ordre*, January 28th 1935, p 1 reprinted in *Idéologies au Canada français 1930-39* : 195.

<sup>79</sup> Parizeau had also diagnosed the lack of humour that Francoeur was to decry. Parizeau saw it specifically as an antipathy to a French sense of humour-tinged polemics. “La gallophobie du *Devoir* est bien connue. C’est par haine instinctive de tout ce qui est jovial et libre qu’il traite par-dessus la jambe ce qui vient de la France, porte la marque de fabrique française, exprime sous quelque forme que ce soit le génie français.” <sup>80</sup>

Each of the phases of LaPalme’s career that we have outlined in these last two chapters might be best reconsidered against studies of the ideological temperatures taken of the 1930s in a series of studies from Université Laval, many under the guidance of sociologist Fernand Dumont. One of the key volumes in this series, André Bélanger’s *L’apolitisme des idéologies québécoises. Le grand tournant 1934-1936*, addressed what Lionel Groulx considered to be the cruel letdown of the hopes of these two years. Bélanger, in his assessments of the generation of L’Action nationale and the Jeune-Canada – the generation of André Laurendeau and the *La Nation* team (Paul Bouchard, Jean-Louis Gagnon) - leads us to understand how the field of action was restricted to the text. There were few proposed structures for society’s reform and renewal beyond the characterization of what must be and must not be. Instead, a relentless classification of good and bad, or good and evil was enacted and re-enacted. The safekeeping of these ideals, abstract and emotional as they might be, was to be entrusted to a leader – a messiah. The one who came – Maurice Duplessis – was soon revealed as the anti-

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<sup>79</sup> *L’Ordre*, July 7<sup>th</sup> 1934: 1, reprinted in *Idéologies au Canada français 1930-39*: 194.

<sup>80</sup> *L’Ordre*, August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1934: 1, reprinted in *Idéologies au Canada français 1930-39* : 194.

messiah. Bélanger concludes that the impact of this betrayal was measured in the incapacity to truly act:

[...] le silence le plus opaque est entretenu touchant soit la mise en place de structures, soit l'organisation de mouvements ou encore de formations politiques en vue de réaliser leurs objectifs. Les finalités sont globales et lointaines, presque reportées avec amertume aux calendes grecques. Le conservatisme qui les couvre n'y est finalement pas pour rien dans cette torpeur qui en dernier ressort les rive à l'inaction. L'exutoire du verbe ou de l'écriture semble leur seule issue [to this we add, le dessin]. Le combat présent ne prend aucune autre forme et se tient à l'écart de l'arène politique en dépit des quelques apparitions à peine remarquées des Jeune-Canada lors de campagnes électorales. Ceux-ci se veulent virulents contre l'ennemi, au stade prétentieux de l'éveil des foules. Le spectacle terminé, chacun rentre chez lui et prépare la représentation suivante. La lutte de ces jeunes est évidemment plus vive que celle livrée fort timidement par le cadre classique que s'est imposé ce type de nationalisme: l'action par la parole et le signe écrit.

Written in 1976, these words were echoed in the late 1980s by Fernand Dumont in his *Genèse de la société québécoise* and in 2003 by Gérard Bouchard in *Mythe: raison et contradiction*. The operative capacities of text and myth struggle to find an expression sustained enough to result in action. And the sense of action, of actions taken, victories won or lost, positions regrouped and changed, has somehow to be accounted for in the action of the caricaturist whose work, in its changing relationships to these texts – as either text in itself, or as illustration, or as ironic foil – is, in the first instance, closely allied to the realm of representations, of speech and signs. LaPalme's challenge was to transform his work into an autonomous voice capable of proposing a programme for action, or at least to be part of that proposal. This would be the challenge of his years at *Le Canada* and at *Le Devoir* as his work became more complex, more directly satirical about language, myth, mores and identity in Québec.

Two comments late in life show how LaPalme allowed some of this virulence to permeate his work after 1943 when, in joining *Le Canada*, he developed a radically different conception, both stylistic and in its import, of the nature of caricature. In the interviews conducted by Jean-François Nadeau and published in 1997, LaPalme discussed his treatment of André Laurendeau, who would later be LaPalme's editor at *Le Devoir* and whom he would come to respect tremendously:

Je l'ai représenté en danseur de ballet plus d'une fois. Danseur, homosexuel, intellectuel, on mettait tout ça dans le même sac... Le caricaturiste n'est pas là pour flatter les gens [whereas in the 1930s, it was a form of non-attacking associated portraiture, an impression taken to reveal the soul within]. J'étais caricaturiste au *Canada*, le journal du parti libéral. Je n'aimais pas le Bloc. Pour le *Canada*, Laurendeau était un adversaire. Je le traitais donc comme tel.<sup>81</sup>

Jean-François Nadeau then addresses LaPalme's friendships and politics.

"Dans les années 30, vous étiez lié d'amitié avec l'historien Robert Rumilly. Cela ne vous empêche pas, après la guerre, de le critiquer vertement quand il prend la défense de réfugiés français pétainistes.  
– Rumilly était fascisant. Je ne l'étais pas. Il était aussi un défenseur acharné de Duplessis. Je détestais Duplessis, comme vous le savez".<sup>82</sup>

The measure of LaPalme's distaste may have everything to do with his time as "Adolf" in the fall of 1939 – when he briefly took the *chef's* coin and produced images to order, in complicity with the same betrayal Bélanger sees as the source of inaction. The ironies so beloved of Olivar Asselin, of Louis Francoeur, were perhaps no longer possible, and not possible in this defeat. We saw that those of Asselin masked a latent violence inherited from his beloved Léon Bloy, captured by Valdombre and the 1930s pamphleteers. The *La Nation* group, admirers of Asselin, Bloy, Valdombre, struck their own deal with the *Chef*

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<sup>81</sup> LaPalme (1997): 47.

<sup>82</sup> LaPalme –Rumilly, LaPalme 1997: p 83.

– the usurper, symbolic at home of the terrible compromises and steadfast positions which had turned the romantic image of Europe to one of mass, brutal extinction. Jean-Louis Gagnon and Robert LaPalme turned away altogether, embracing the federal Liberal programme, conscription, the cause of the allies, of democratic expression and parliamentary institutions. At war's end, Gagnon's *Vent du Large*, a memoir celebrating the new Europe, was published by Lucien Parizeau, with a distinctive poster-colour illustration by Robert LaPalme.<sup>83</sup> Their patiently learned techniques of propaganda and irony would now serve in what would prove to be a long campaign against Duplessis and his régime. By the summer of 1945, Robert Ayre reported in *Canadian Art* magazine that "Robert LaPalme has a terrific punch, as those who see his daily caricatures in *Le Canada* know. 'I like to go to the limit,' he says, '–tear a man apart.'<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Lucien Parizeau, « The French Tradition in Publishing. » *Canadian Art* vol 3:4 july 1946 : 145-149. The cover for this issue is an illustration by Robert LaPalme for Andrée Maillet's "Ristontac" published by Editions Lucien Parizeau.

<sup>84</sup> Robert Ayre, "Bravo! LaPalme". *Canadian Art* vol 2: 4 aug-sept 1945 p 150-154



## Chapter Four

### Robert LaPalme and the construction of Québec political identity in wartime

#### 1. Robert LaPalme, the Galerie municipale de Québec and France libre

##### 1.1. Père Couturier and the Québec artistic avant-garde : the *Première exposition des indépendants*

From April 26<sup>th</sup> to May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1941, the *Première exposition des indépendants*, organized by Marie-Alain Couturier, o.p., was presented at the Galerie municipale de Québec, in the foyer of the Palais Montcalm, a decade-old concert hall, library and exhibition complex.<sup>1</sup> It was the gallery's inaugural exhibition, and the fulfilment of a dream nurtured by Robert LaPalme since 1939: to establish a showcase for leading contemporary art in Québec City.<sup>2</sup> While initial plans for the gallery had been put aside because of the outbreak of war, LaPalme apparently found swift support in March 1941: "Un groupe de peintres de Montréal s'était alors vu refuser la permission d'exposer à l'École des beaux-arts de Québec [EBAQ]. Cette décision m'indignait tant elle était ridicule. J'étais révolté et me disais que cette exposition aurait lieu, contre vents et marées."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Première exposition des indépendants/du 26 avril au 3 mai/41/Galerie municipale/Foyer du Palais Montcalm/ Québec – Canada*. [Québec, Galerie municipale, 1941] (hereafter referred to as *Première exposition*.) The Palais Montcalm was erected on the site of the former Montcalm market on Place d'Youville, with a \$150,000 grant from the federal government; inaugurated on October 21 1932, it housed the offices of the Institut canadien (1932-1944) and the Quebec City CBC radio station from 1940. See Irène Brisson, "Palais Montcalm", in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=UIARTU0002695> accessed on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006. As we shall see below, it was also home to the Québec City offices of France Libre, the movement that opposed the Vichy government of Marshal Philippe Pétain.

<sup>2</sup> LaPalme (1997): 94.

Evidently, neither EBAQ director Omer Parent nor Professor Jean-Paul Lemieux, for whom LaPalme had been a teaching assistant until December 1939, felt that it was possible to accept the proposed exhibition. LaPalme thus resuscitated the Galerie municipale project and immediately found the exhibition venue through a key supporter, Judge Émile Morin.

The gallery's origins, seemingly emanating from a heartfelt wish to have a public space devoted to the exhibition of contemporary art alone, can be traced to a January 1939 letter sent by Robert LaPalme to the then-mayor of Québec, Lucien Borne. No official reply was received until one year later, with estimates for the installation of this gallery in the Palais Montcalm following from the city inspector on March 11, 1940.<sup>4</sup> According to LaPalme, another year then elapsed : "Adrien Pouliot, doyen de la faculté des sciences de l'Université Laval, m'appuyait, ainsi qu'Émile Morin, un juge. Tout allait aboutir lorsque la guerre a éclaté. C'est seulement deux ans plus tard, en mars 1941 précisément, que le projet se concrétise." The project became reality in the spring of 1941 as LaPalme

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. LaPalme continues: "J'ai discuté de cela avec Omer Parent et Jean-Paul Lemieux. Parent ne voulait pas risquer son travail pour une exposition. Il s'était refusé, mais je l'ai trouvé élégant dans l'expression de son refus. Lemieux m'est apparu lâche à cette occasion [...] ».

<sup>4</sup> The episode is documented in the presentation of Paul-Émile Borduas's participation in the *Réponse des Indépendants à Maillard*, in André-G. Bourassa, Jean Fisette and Gilles Lapointe, eds., *Paul-Émile Borduas. Écrits I* (Montréal, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, coll. Bibliothèque du Nouveau Monde, 1987) [hereafter Borduas I] 144-150. LaPalme's correspondence on the subject of the gallery and the exhibition of the Indépendants involves the officials of Quebec City, Marie-Alain Couturier and John Lyman, are presented in both main text and footnotes to these pages. A number of these letters being cited by the editors as 'inédits' in 1987, it seems probable that LaPalme was their source. LaPalme may have also been the source of the assertion in n.5, p 145, that "Les événements qu'entraîna le Salon lui coûtèrent son emploi" as librarian at the EBAQ. However, as we have seen, LaPalme had already been dismissed in December 1939. The editors' interpretation of the assumed responses of the "École des beaux-arts" leave it unclear whether they are correctly identifying that of Québec or of Montreal.

welcomed the *Indépendants* exhibition. This project, along with his close friendships with leading Quebec City artists, placed LaPalme at the heart of the leading artistic initiatives in Québec at this time. The Galerie's organizing committee also reflected LaPalme's position in Québec City. The committee's president was Judge Morin. Adrien Pouliot, dean of the faculty of sciences at Université Laval where LaPalme taught a drawing class in the school of engineering, was its vice-President. Second vice-president was A. G. Penney. Jean-Louis Gagnon, former collaborator at *L'Ordre*, *Le Journal* and *l'Événement-Journal*, was Secretary and Guy Roberge the treasurer. LaPalme was named director.<sup>5</sup>

Once the Galerie was up and running, he invited the "indépendants" group to Québec City.<sup>6</sup> As the daily political caricaturist for *L'Action catholique*, LaPalme devoted a caricature to the organiser, Marie-Alain Couturier, on April 25<sup>th</sup>, and another to the exhibition itself on the 26<sup>th</sup> (Figures 4-1 and 4-2). "Le révérend père Couturier, instigateur de l'exposition refusée à l'École des beaux-arts, fut invité à donner une

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<sup>5</sup> Judge Émile Morin may be the author (Me Émile Morin, 1895-[?]) of *La Municipalité, la municipalité scolaire, la paroisse religieuse et civile* ([Montréal] : publié par le Service d'éducation du Syndicat national des fonctionnaires municipaux de Montréal, inc., [1957?]), the possibility being given weight by the publisher's note : « Série de cours donnés sous l'égide de la Faculté des sciences sociales de l'Université Laval ». A.-G. Penny was very likely the journalist Arthur G. Penny (1886-1963) of the *Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph*; seven books under this name and imprint are recorded at the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec. Guy Roberge (1915-[?]) was author of the article "Paradoxe du cinéma" in *EDHEC61 : Canada* (Lille [France] : [Finissants de l'École de hautes études commerciales du Nord], [1961] ) and of the preface to the Institut canadien des affaires publiques, *Le Canada face à l'avenir : (un pays qui s'interroge) : travaux présentés à la onzième conférence annuelle de l'Institut canadien des affaires publiques (ICAP) organisée avec le concours de la Société Radio-Canada et compte rendu des discussions / ICAP* [avant-propos de Guy Roberge] (Montréal : les Editions du Jour, 1961). Jean-Louis Gagnon notes in *Apostasies* I: 188-189, that Pierre Chaloult, Guy Roberge, Robert and Nanette LaPalme and Jean-Charles Falardeau, among others, were all part of a circle of collegial friends who might not agree on politics but happily congregated at the Old Homestead restaurant opposite the Château Frontenac to have endless discussions over fine meals.

<sup>6</sup> LaPalme (1997): 95.

conférence. Ce dominicain était le délégué de l'Institut scientifique de France. *L'Action catholique* avait imprimé, à mes frais, les cartons d'invitation et le catalogue de l'exposition."<sup>7</sup>

Fifty-six works were presented by eleven painters: Paul-Emile Borduas, S. Mary Bouchard, Stanley Cosgrove, Louise Gadbois, Eric Goldberg, John Lyman, Louis Muhlstock, Alfred Pellán, Goodridge Roberts, Jori Smith and Philip Surrey.<sup>8</sup> All but two were artist-members of Montreal's Contemporary Arts Society (CAS), the additional artists being Pellán, at the height of the impact made by his return from France in May 1940, and Bouchard, a "primitive" painter admired by John Lyman.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, no mention of the CAS affiliation was made in the accompanying catalogue-pamphlet. Although the subsequent historiographic record has confirmed the close link between the group and this exhibition, LaPalme was the first to draw attention to the latter's prior rejection by the EBAQ.

The artists were presented as "indépendants", a term that distinguished them from the "académiques" who dominated the teaching at the EBAQ. The situation was the same at its counterpart, the École des beaux-arts de Montréal (EBAM), where the director Charles

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<sup>7</sup> LaPalme (1997) : 95-98.

<sup>8</sup> *Première exposition des indépendants*: [6, 8] The printed list presented the following variations in spelling: Louis Muhlstock, Goodridge Roberts.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society* (Edmonton Art Gallery, 1980): 40, presents membership lists for 1939, 1942 and 1948; Bouchard and Pellán both appear for the first time in the 1942 list. Pellán first participated in a CAS – organized exhibition in late 1940, in *Art of our Day in Canada*, presented at the Art Association of Montreal from November 22 to December 15. The first C.A.S.-organised exhibition to list S. Marie Bouchard was *Dessins, Estampes, Sculpture/Drawings, Prints, Sculpture*, presented at Henry Morgan & Co. in Montréal, December 1-31, 1941.

Maillard was an old enemy of both Pellan and Borduas. Père Couturier's foreword stressed the importance of an independent painting for the city of Québec. Oft-quoted, the text bears revisiting at some length :

Si nous avons voulu organiser dans cette ville de Québec une exposition de peinture indépendante, ce n'est pas dans un esprit de propagande ou de fronde, c'est parce que nous avons connu en France les bienfaits de la liberté dans les arts et que nous voudrions les retrouver ici. Si « l'école de Paris » a pu rayonner, sans conteste, dans le monde entier depuis un siècle, c'est qu'elle n'était rien d'autre que le rassemblement dans cette ville, de talents, de pensées et de cœurs vraiment libres. Libres non seulement des assujettissements réalistes ou des conformismes académiques, mais libres aussi de tout dessein politique ou idéologique.<sup>10</sup>

It is not that liberty is sufficient for everything; rather, it is the very *condition* of everything:

[...] car nous avons pu, en effet, constater en Europe [...] la stérilité des formules d'académie et la faillite totale des arts « officiels », qu'ils soient fascistes, nazistes ou staliniens.

Nous savons qu'il n'en fut pas toujours ainsi. Nous savons qu'en d'autres temps, le service de très hautes idées religieuses ou sociales, a pu surélever l'art lui-même. Et nous appelons de tous nos vœux le retour de ces temps plus humains que le nôtre. Mais, en attendant, comme ce retour ne dépend pas d'eux, le devoir des artistes est de maintenir leur art dans une route plus étroite et plus humble mais où, du moins, il n'est pas entravé.

Il est certain, par ailleurs, que cette liberté a toujours pour rançon l'isolement des artistes et nous voulons espérer qu'au Canada, le public, en respectant leur indépendance, n'abandonnera pas les artistes à cet isolement, comme il l'a fait si longtemps en Europe.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> And it did so again, in appropriately modified form, for the re-presentation of the exhibition at Morgan's department store in Montreal on May 8<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> *Première exposition*: [3-4]. The full text is presented in Appendix A. The full text was also reprinted in Rolland Boulanger's text for the catalogue of the 1966 commemorative exhibition underlining the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Première exposition* as a foundational moment in the development of Québec modernist painting (Ministère des affaires culturelles, *Peinture vivante du Québec. 1966 Vingt-cinq ans de libération de l'oeil et du geste*. Québec: Musée du Québec, n.d.) and in Monique Brunet-Weinmann's 1987 article (see below, note 15) : 156-157. LaPalme (1997: 98) felt that he was treated as hardly more than a « concierge » in Rolland Boulanger's 1966 text.

But Couturier's remit went further. He addressed the international situation: "fascism, nazism, stalinism", all associated to the imperatives of "official" art, stood against the encouragement of Liberty which had prevailed at Paris for a hundred years, sending its light out across the world. Thus there could be artistic liberty from conformism, from the academic, from political or ideological intentions. Artists did not bear responsibility for bringing humanity to its senses, but they had a duty to keep their art free.

Couturier's journals and writings published in these years show his profound engagement with the idea of liberty, and his aversion to the conservative in art and in society.<sup>12</sup> To the charge that France, secular and socialist, had weakened itself and thereby earned its defeat at the hands of Nazi Germany, Couturier responded by casting shame on the exploitation that could lead citizens to take up socialist means.<sup>13</sup> Tellingly, he did not restrict his artistic philosophy to the religious: "le service de très hautes idées religieuses ou sociales, a pu surélever l'art lui-même" [emphasis added].

Père Marie-Alain Couturier (1897-1954) had come to New York in late 1939 on a spiritual mission. He already had a reputation as a leader in the revival of sacred art in

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<sup>12</sup> These journals, unpublished in Couturier's lifetime, were anthologized by the Menil Foundation in 1984. Marie-Alain Couturier, *La vérité blessée. Avant propos de Michel Serres* (Paris, Plon, 1984). *Art et catholicisme*, published by Montreal's Éditions de l'Arbre, appeared first in 1941 and then in an augmented edition in 1945. In the same year, Couturier contributed an essay to the collective *Fernand Léger : la forme humaine dans l'espace* [essays by M.A. Couturier, Maurice Gagnon, S. Giedion, François Hertel, S.M. Kootz, Fernand Léger, J.J. Sweeny] (Montréal, Éditions de l'Arbre, 1945).

<sup>13</sup> "Chez nous, imprudence de l'expérience socialiste de Blum – imprudence aussi des Bourgeois qui ont rendu desirable aux ouvriers le régime de Blum". Marie-Alain Couturier, *La vérité blessée* (Paris, Plon: 1984) : 21.

pre-war France.<sup>14</sup> There then followed two highly important visits to Québec, which we can follow thanks to the research carried out by Monique Brunet-Weinmann from the late 1970s and early 1980s. In March 1940, as plans were being discussed to improve the training of artists for religious commissions in Québec, the Institut scientifique franco-canadien at the Université de Montréal invited Couturier to give lectures, while Charles Maillard at the EBAM asked him to give practical classes on religious art applied to liturgy.<sup>15</sup> On arriving, met by Paul-Emile Borduas, he was alerted to the excessively academic teaching of the EBAM.<sup>16</sup> In the lecture of March 10, entitled “Problème d’un art religieux canadien”, he traced the poverty of Québec’s religious art to the predominance of its clergy.

Ici, où l’on n’a pas fait 89 [1789, the year of the French Revolution], où la discipline de la foi et des mœurs ne s’est pas relâchée, où la puissance du clergé est demeuré intacte, comment se fait-il que la même décadence [as in France] se soit produite? [...] Autre problème tout à fait connexe : comment se fait-il que ce soit précisément dans cette même France, anarchiste, impertinente, insubordonnée, que la renaissance ait commencé?<sup>17</sup>

Can a country that has been sheltered from revolution, from anarchy and insubordination, produce worthy art, and with it religious art of the highest order?

Pour qu’il y ait un art chrétien dans un pays, il faut d’abord qu’il y ait dans ce pays un art vivant. Avec tout ce que cela comporte de liberté et de risques acceptés.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The most detailed account of Père Couturier’s stay in Québec in 1940-41, and of his impact in the years 1940-45, will be found in Monique Brunet-Weinmann, « Le père Couturier au Québec (1940-1941) : un vent de liberté », *RACAR* vol XIV, no 1-2 (1987): 151-158.

<sup>15</sup> Brunet-Weinmann, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> See below, note 20.

<sup>17</sup> *Revue Dominicaine* (Montréal, June 1940), 283-85, reprinted in Brunet-Weinmann, *op.cit.*: 154 and note 13.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

His work in North America continued, and he was caught by the capitulation of France on June 18, 1940. By December, he had returned to Montreal, and was directly involved with more advanced plans to establish the Ateliers d'artisanat religieux through the École du meuble de Montréal, where Borduas taught under Jean-Marie Gauvreau.<sup>19</sup> Gauvreau had been working on this project for some time, having sought the necessary approval of the Archdiocese of Montreal. Couturier was closely involved in meetings which postulated a leading role for him, and which proposed an eventual affiliation of the Ateliers with the Université de Montreal. These ambitious plans fell afoul of the territorial ambitions of Charles Maillard, increasing tensions between Maillard and Gauvreau and contrasting the pedagogical values held by the men and their respective institutions.

In December, Père Couturier appears to have met John Lyman and the members of the CAS and to have seen the group's exhibition *Art of our Time in Canada* at the Art Association of Montreal (November 22-December 15), where the CAS members were joined by leading artists from across Canada.<sup>20</sup> The plans for the *Indépendants* exhibition, already set in motion by Lyman, followed shortly. In this period, Couturier developed his teaching and his personal contacts with the artists of the CAS and the École du meuble. Plans were made to regroup some of his writings for a small anthology to be published in

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<sup>19</sup> The story of the *Ateliers* and details of the minutes of meetings held to organize it will be found in François-Marc Gagnon, *Paul-Émile Borduas (1905-1960). Biographie critique et analyse de l'oeuvre* (Montréal, Fides, 1978) : 90-92, and *Chronique du mouvement automatiste québécois 1941-1954* (Montréal, Lanctôt éditeur, 1998): 29-31.

<sup>20</sup> See Varley, op. cit..



Québec. This volume, *Art et catholicisme*, was eventually published on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, having been prepared between December 1940 and early March 1941. *Art et catholicisme* was the second in the series *Problèmes actuels*, edited by Jacques Maritain for Les éditions de l'Arbre. This fledgling Montreal publishing house was founded by Robert Charbonneau and Claude Hurtubise in late 1940.<sup>21</sup> Its endeavours were part of a publishing boom in wartime Montreal. Firms such as L'Arbre, Éditions Bernard Valiquette, Éditions Variétés, Éditions Lucien Parizeau and Société des éditions Pascal fed a worldwide demand for classic and new francophone literature in the absence of printed materials from France, which was under Allied commercial and military blockade. As of September 1939, the Canadian government had foreseen this role for Québec and had enacted legislation providing for the payment of authors' rights into escrow for the duration of the war. The Québec publishing industry became transformed beyond recognition, with consequences for book design and illustration. Robert LaPalme took a leading role beginning in 1944.

Charbonneau and Hurtubise were veteran editors of *La Relève*, the personalist-Christian review of ideas, culture and society which had drawn its inspiration and world view from the works of Maritain since March 1934.<sup>22</sup> It will be remembered that LaPalme drew a caricature of Maritain for *L'Ordre* in October 1934 (Figure 2-20). Charbonneau,

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<sup>21</sup> Jacques Michon, "Les éditions de l'Arbre (1941-48)", in *Éditeurs transatlantiques* (1991) : 13-42.

<sup>22</sup> The *La Relève* group's efforts have been seen as fated to a kind of irrelevancy: "La Relève, comme la JEC [Jeunesse étudiante chrétienne], partage le sort apolitique de leurs contemporains. La Relève souscrit à une communion des hommes, mais hors de la société concrète. Elle s'en tient à la conversion des consciences, loin des aléas que connaît la collectivité à l'époque." André-J. Bélanger, "Les idéologies et leur désert politique", in *Idéologies au Canada français, 1930-1939* (Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1978) : 29-39.

Hurtubise and fellow alumni of the Collège Sainte-Marie, including André Laurendeau and Saint-Denys Garneau, joined in the international network of “fundamental humanists” whose analysis of political events placed them in opposition to fascist trends in Europe. Les éditions de l’Arbre’s first publication, in January 1941, was Maritain’s *Crépuscule de la civilisation*, first published in Paris in 1939; an extract had appeared in *La relève* in 1940. Maritain’s book was the first of the *Problèmes actuels* series.

Like Père Couturier, Jacques Maritain was caught in exile by the capitulation of France on June 18, 1940. The great majority of the French diplomatic corps at Ottawa, Montreal and Québec City pledged loyalty to the new Vichy régime under Marshal Philippe Pétain. His *Révolution nationale*, offered in the name of cleansing defeated, worn, decadent, republican and secular France, established a reactionary social order based on the notions of Famille, Travail, Patrie; on the primacy of clerical involvement in all walks of life; on the disenfranchisement and dispossession of Jews (and, tacitly, on collaboration with the Nazi genocide), and on the replacement of republican institutions by corporatist representation of orders of society. The diplomatic corps accordingly conveyed the message that the True France was taking its rightful, though diminished place, and that Allied action against the occupier was unnecessary.

Couturier and Maritain were part of a community of exiles and envoys who found common cause in the promotion of the France Libre movement of General Charles de Gaulle. And their actions in Québec only took on meaning as part of the promotion of France Libre ideals, predicated on a military response to the German occupier and the

restitution of Third Republic democratic institutions. But while the capitulation of France came as a profound shock to French Canadians, there were many who admired the elderly statesman Pétain, who “offered his body” to cleanse the state and who admired a political régime which closely resembled that of the dreams of Lionel Groulx, of *Vivre* and *La Nation*, of the Action Libérale Nationale and of the Union nationale. The undoing of parliamentary democracy in France was considered an admirable first step, even if steeped in tragedy and blood.

This acceptance of apocalypse and redemption was, of course, marked by the distancing of the true arena of the war. But if exempt from warfare on its own soil, Québec was prey to a battle of representations. The surfacing of an artistic battle in which representation itself was at stake paralleled other battles about representation of Québec and France, among which the ideal (but for now, missing) utopian France of the dreams of Québec’s corporatists and democrats alike.<sup>23</sup>

These layers of representation certainly all met in the Exposition des indépendants. The institutions involved (the EBAQ and EBAM, the Université de Montréal, the Palais Montcalm, the Dominican brotherhood, *L’Action Catholique* and other organs of the realms of print and broadcasting under wartime censorship) had positions, by allegiance and by affiliation, which were largely governed by diplomatic, governmental and Church initiatives.

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<sup>23</sup> Eric Amyot, *Le Québec entre Pétain et De Gaulle. Vichy, la France Libre et les canadiens français 1940-45* (Montréal, Fides, 1999). Amyot sees strong links between *Pétainiste* ideology and that of Bloc populaire canadien leader Maxime Raymond. In these links he situates the birthplace of Quebec left,

At this time, France Libre's resources were minimal. The bulk of its support, financial and moral, came from the French expatriate community in New York City, working with wealthy American individuals and institutions bent on advancing the cause of Britain and France Libre in an officially neutral United States. Communications with Vichy France and the Occupied Zone were extremely difficult. For France Libre to speak of the distress of Vichy took information: but this was tightly controlled by Vichy; news might be broadcast or printed, but it was heavily censored or shaped for propaganda.

Communications by sea or air were highly dangerous. But the US was neutral, and thus communications were maintained between Vichy and Washington.

As for Canada, the Liberal administration of Mackenzie King very carefully negotiated the sentiments of Québec as part of the overall Canadian war effort. The elements were explosive, contradictory and ambiguous. There was a sympathetic provincial Liberal government in place at Québec City. French-Canadian society on the whole was willing to participate in the war so long as conscription remained a dead letter. Yet the fear of conscription was fomented from the outset by intellectuals, politicians and journalists warning against its inevitable introduction, with attendant consequences for a French Canadian society which, it was claimed, disapproved (having done so since Henri Bourassa and the Boer War) of any military participation in a war seen as the inevitable consequence of British imperial ambitions and treachery. At the same time, French Canada had strong humanist, pro-parliamentary, resolutely anti-Nazi feelings; it was a

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because of its belief in role of state, and because of its advocacy for Québec neo-nationalism in which the nation assumes roles previously undertaken by the Church (186-191).

complex community divided. At stake was a set of identities. The federal government, responsible for the prosecution of war, took great pains to defuse and prevent any antagonism that might launch divisions into the open, at a time when it must represent nation as unified.

Any action for France Libre – any action, political or cultural, connected to its representatives in the first year following the capitulation – was unavoidably linked to these struggles. In this quagmire, the bold actions of Couturier and Maritain and the editors of Éditions de l'Arbre stand out. Furthermore, Couturier and Maritain did not restrict themselves to the matters of art and humanist political analysis. They were far more instrumental, as is made clear by the actions of another of Charles de Gaulle's envoys, Elisabeth de Miribel. This headstrong and rebellious daughter of an ancestral military family, itself loyal to Army and thus to Pétain, arrived in Montreal in September 1940. She set about influencing public opinion, particularly among the French expatriate communities but also amongst cultural, political and Church leaders, towards the acceptance of a role for de Gaulle in the war. But persuading the public of the vicissitudes of life at Vichy was hard:

Nous nous sommes contentés de diffuser des extraits de lettres venant de France, que Jacques Maritain et le père Couturier nous faisaient parvenir de New York. Nous les diffusions sur un papier grand format orné d'une croix de Lorraine et de la devise de sainte Thérèse d'Avila : « Mourir oui, capituler jamais ».<sup>24</sup>

De Miribel paid close attention to matters in the provincial capital. She soon learned that the editor of *L'Événement-Journal*, Jean-Louis Gagnon, was already a firm supporter of

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid: 212.

de Gaulle. She found the head of consulate to be inclined, on the whole, to let France Libre ideas take root. A France Libre committee had been organized by Marthe Simard; among its members were père Georges-Henri Lévesque and Professor Auguste Viatte of Université Laval.<sup>25</sup> Overall, Québec City proved to be a bastion of Gaullist support. In 1940-41, all concerned recognized that their promotion of France Libre must not provoke controversy; that although the Vichy régime might well find disfavour, Pétain was very widely admired; and that nothing must be done to disturb the delicate balance which was also of crucial importance to the overall Canadian war effort. This was the message conveyed by de Miribel to Cardinal Jean-Marie Rodrigue Villeneuve.<sup>26</sup> It was precisely the message which emerged in *L'Action Catholique*, then at the height of its influence. In an October 1940 editorial, "Pétain et de Gaulle". Louis-Philippe Roy quoted a young (anonymous) expatriate French woman – very likely de Miribel herself.<sup>27</sup>

Le conquérant nous écrasera le plus possible. Notre espoir de salut c'est la défaite du vainqueur et le triomphe de son alliée d'hier. [Pétain et de Gaulle] sont deux hommes de droite, deux catholiques qui, à l'heure actuelle, s'efforcent sincèrement de servir au mieux la France... J'admire la vaillance du vénérable vieillard qui a accepté de diriger les destinées de mon pays vaincu, mais je souhaite du plus profond du cœur le succès de de Gaulle pour que la France redevienne libre.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "À Québec, Élisabeth de Miribel peut compter sur le soutien de Jean-Louis Gagnon. Elle entretient aussi des relations soutenues avec Marthe Simard, présidente d'un précoce comité France libre dans la capitale. L'un des membres est un dominicain âgé de 37 ans, le père Georges-Henri Lévesque, de l'Université Laval. De cet établissement, le comité recevra aussi l'appui du professeur Auguste Viatte. Le regroupement se veut à l'abri de toute controverse." Yves Lavertu, *Jean-Charles Harvey, le combattant* (Montréal, Boréal, 2000) : 199.

<sup>26</sup> Amyot, op. cit.: 125.

<sup>27</sup> Although not named in Roy's article, the "daughter of military" corresponds to the description of Élisabeth de Miribel in Amyot, op. cit.: 119-120; her meeting with Villeneuve appears to have directly elicited wide media coverage (125).

In a later editorial, “Maritain, de Gaulle et la France”, published on April 4 1941, Roy continued to square the circle, alleging that the longed-for triumph of Pétain’s vision of France could only be guaranteed by de Gaulle’s and the Free French forces’ participation in the Allied struggle against Germany.<sup>29</sup> That Roy could do so was a measure of the strong shifts then taking place in public opinion.

These changes were being carefully wrought throughout journalism and broadcasting. Elisabeth de Miribel had also worked hard, for instance, at persuading the very popular and intellectually redoubtable journalist Louis Francoeur to move away from the tragic, Pétainist acceptance he had manifested in the immediate aftermath of the Fall of France in his nightly Radio-Canada broadcasts *La situation, ce soir* from July 1940 onwards.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, these broadcasts began to be printed in bi-weekly compendia as of New Year 1941, by which time Francoeur’s position had moved towards France Libre. Since Radio Canada did not yet have a publishing arm, the texts were printed as pamphlets by Roland Beaudry’s Éditions Revue moderne, at whose eponymous monthly magazine Francoeur was, as we have seen, a prized columnist. Under Beaudry, the *Revue moderne* also actively promoted literature by young women writers such as Gabrielle Roy and Carole Richard. The Richard name was the *nom-de-plume* of Laurette Larocque, a.k.a. the actress and radio and television writer Jean Desprez. This writer was a close colleague of Fulgence Charpentier, the government’s director of censorship for the

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<sup>28</sup> *L’Action catholique*, October 12th 1940: 4. Elisabeth de Miribel’s work is recounted in detail in Amyot, op. cit.: 118-136 and *passim*; for her activities in autumn 1940, see also Lavertu, op. cit.: 199.

<sup>29</sup> Louis-Philippe Roy, “Maritain, de Gaulle et la France ». *L’Action catholique*, April 4th 1941: 4.

<sup>30</sup> Elisabeth de Miribel’s influence on Francoeur is recounted in Amyot, op, cit: 128-129.

francophone press during the war. Charpentier would later write a remarkable text presenting Robert LaPalme to a Paris audience.<sup>31</sup> The *Revue moderne*'s board of directors included Liberal MP Hector Authier, former Minister of Mines in the Taschereau administration, elected to Ottawa for a single term in 1940-45.<sup>32</sup> The confluence of encouragement of criticism and emerging literature, with the direction of culture and political opinion in wartime through broadcasting, was not alien to the efforts which encompassed the King administration's links to its own press (such as *Le Canada*) and the press it had been able to enlist (such as *L'Action catholique*).

February 9, 1941 saw the consecration of the war effort through a "national" (specifically, French-Canadian and Catholic) day of prayer, celebrated by Cardinal Villeneuve at Notre Dame Basilica in Montreal and at churches throughout the province.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, faced with a divided France Libre movement at Montreal and

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<sup>31</sup> François-Xavier Simard and André Larose, *Jean Desprez (1906-1965). Une femme de tête, de courage et de cœur* (Ottawa, Vermillion, 2001) : 122-130. Charpentier eventually became a diplomat, opening many of Canada's embassies in Africa, and became the dean of all journalists in the world through his column at *Le Droit*, maintained until the age of 101 in 1999. Born in 1897, he died in 2001.

<sup>32</sup> "Aux éditions de la Revue Moderne", photograph of Hector Authier in *Le Canada*, August 9th 1943: 3. The caption explains that Authier's publishing house has just released its first book, a translation of William L. Shirer's *Berlin Diary* by Albert Pascal. Pascal was the pseudonym of Gérard Dagenais, former journalist at *Le Canada* and translator in the early 1940s of volumes for the Editions de l'Arbre, the Éditions Bernard Valiquette and for *La Revue Moderne* of which he was the secretary. Dagenais founded Société des éditions Pascal in 1944, where he published Maurice Gagnon's *Sur un état actuel de la peinture canadienne*. See Michon (2004): 72-75 and *passim*.

<sup>33</sup> As Lapointe's biographer Lisa-Rose Betcherman commented, "the day of prayer was Lapointe's suggestion. In December he had written Quebec's lieutenant-governor, Sir Eugène Fiset, that it would provide an opportunity for all French Canadians 'to dedicate themselves to the war effort and to doing their utmost for victory.' Fiset broached the idea to Cardinal Villeneuve, who embraced it enthusiastically." Lisa-Rose Betcherman, *Ernest Lapointe : Mackenzie King's great Quebec lieutenant* (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2002): 330. Conrad Black saw the matter slightly differently in his *Duplessis* (Toronto: MacLelland and Stewart, 1977): "It was just the kind of religious extravaganza the cardinal loved; a magnifico by inclination, Villeneuve would have made an ideal Renaissance pope" (239).



Ottawa, Elisabeth de Miribel had pressed for the sending of a new envoy from de Gaulle. In a decision designed to appeal to the constituent components of Québec's conflicted identity, de Gaulle found an ideal symbolic representative: war hero, reverend father and serving naval officer Thierry d'Argenlieu, who met Mackenzie King and Ernest Lapointe in March 1941.<sup>34</sup> From this time forward Gaullist activities in Québec began to be more overtly encouraged by government support, and the impact on cultural activities was more and more evident. Transformations were thus being wrought simultaneously in Québec political and cultural positions by men of the cloth representing France Libre.

In this light, and given the very careful negotiations between Pétainist and Gaullist allegiances taking place at diplomatic and home government levels, bolstered by the exercise of cultural influence, the flurry of artistic activities of the winter and spring of 1940-41 have a special significance. The artistic battles were also political battles; they took place in a society coming to terms with the War and with the fall of France. This was the year between the French capitulation and the entry of the Soviet Union into the war. The battle between academicism and art vivant at the Écoles des Beaux-Arts of Québec and Montreal paralleled a battle for the purpose and potential of the sacred in art. In this, one of the cornerstones of Québec society – the clerical hold over political and cultural expression – was being challenged from within, in the name of another cornerstone, that of France as a founding myth of Québec: a myth defined now as France

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<sup>34</sup> Betcherman, op. cit: 335: "Lapointe was relaxing his prohibition on Gaullist activity in French Canada. Though Quebecers as a whole still venerated Marshal Pétain, by the winter of 1941 admiration was growing for General de Gaulle's determination to fight on in the name of France. Sensing the subtle change in public opinion in the province, Lapointe concluded that barring the Free French would be divisive in itself."

libre and, perhaps by extension, Québec libre. But in this particular year, the protection of France libre meant a pretence, that action could be kept separate from vision. The *apolitisme*, the “freedom from ideological restraints” advocated for artistic endeavour by Père Couturier, here acquired a very layered resonance. The duality of the march towards the renewal of art as a practice abstracted from the world of representations while at the same time preoccupied with its own social import, echoed the claims for the truly free artist made by Père Couturier in the specific context of 1940-41.

Couturier’s preface to *Art et Catholicisme* had been composed on March 15<sup>th</sup>. As the work of a Dominican Father, it required the sanction of the Church: the *nihil obstat* and the *Imprimatur* were granted at Montreal on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> respectively. The printing was completed at the Imprimerie du Sacré-Coeur on May 3<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>35</sup> Five brief essays were gathered together, four of which had been composed in France in the 1930s, the last a response to the situation of sacred art in Canada, first published in Montreal’s *Revue dominicaine* in 1940. Each essay was marked by the idea that the truly free artist – one who escapes from academic and clerical restraint – could yet offer the art which would most truly engage the sense of the religious, of the sacred. El Greco and Picasso were presented as evidence. Couturier saw the Catholic Church, so long responsible for the commissioning of outstanding art, as having become tragically derelict in its duty since the time of Delacroix and Manet. Paying no heed to the developments of modern art,

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<sup>35</sup> See Jacques Michon, “Catalogue des éditions de L’Arbre”, in Groupe de recherche sur l’édition littéraire au Québec, *Éditeurs transatlantiques : Études sur les éditions de l’Arbre*, Lucien Parizeau, Fernand Pilon, Serge Broussseau, Mangin, B.D. Simpson (Sherbrooke and Montréal, Éditions Ex Libris and Éditions Triptyque, 1991 : 185-226) : 196-197. Michon notes that chapters 4 and 5 had been previously published in the *Revue Dominicaine* in early 1941. *Art et catholicisme* was almost sold out by September 1941, and an augmented reprint was published by L’Arbre in 1945, at the presses of *Le Soleil* newspaper.

choosing to not even be curious about it, the Church had lost the impetus to reinvigorate sacred art. It had effectively withdrawn from a vast field of enquiry through which artists expressed anxiety about the transformations of life in the modern world. This sense of abdication was, by implication, attributed to the clergy of Québec; if the public ignored its leading artists, whether in Europe or Québec, it was surely because the Church led by example.<sup>36</sup>

If the *Indépendants* exhibition project was indeed refused by Parent and Lemieux at the EBAQ, the fear of disapproval by the Church may have been the implicit reason. And even if this disapproval was imagined, the effect was no less real.

Couturier gave two lectures at the Université de Montréal on March 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> 1941, just as the finishing touches were being put to *Art et Catholicisme*. At the first of these lectures, Couturier met Henri Laugier, another key envoy of General de Gaulle. Laugier had just arrived in Montreal, having come via the US. The Rockefeller Foundation facilitated his hiring, with funding, for the position of professor in physiology then open at the Université de Montréal. He remained in Montreal for three years, teaching during the week and returning to the US on weekends. This erudite and energetic figure, former director of the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) and deputy minister in the Front populaire government, was a charismatic teacher and a tireless ambassador for France Libre. Aside from the many articles written for Québec newspapers, Laugier

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<sup>36</sup> The final chapter, "Recommencements de l'art sacré au Canada", bore a dedication: "à mes amis/Jean-Marie Gauvreau,/Marcel Parizeau,/Maurice Gagnon,/Paul Borduas[sic]". Couturier, *Art et catholicisme* (1941): 85.

directed another publication strand for Les Éditions de l'Arbre. This was the *France Forever* series (1942-45) funded by the American organization of the same name, which jointly promoted its political and scientific aims through a programme of mass-appeal publications. The funding was channelled to Éditions de l'Arbre through the US Office of War Information in New York. On meeting Couturier in March 1941, Laugier was a different ambassador, this time for the cause of abstraction in art. A devoted follower of modern art and friend of Picasso, Laugier found in Couturier a kindred spirit, but one who had not yet embraced the capacity of abstract art to express the human search for the spiritual.

It appears that Couturier was persuaded of this by the time he left Canada in June 1941, and perhaps in time for the activities surrounding the exhibition he had organised for Québec City and Montreal in late April and early May. As we have seen, Robert LaPalme invited Couturier to give the inaugural lecture, on the eve of the exhibition's opening to the public: his sinuous caricature of the Dominican father appeared in *L'Action catholique* of Friday, April 25<sup>th</sup>. It was subtitled with an invitation to the general public to attend that evening's lecture. When he spoke, Couturier (already highly respected for his clear, forceful and impassioned speaking style) went further. These paintings, he said, represented "la meilleure peinture qu'il y ait actuellement dans le Québec"; the painters were working in a spirit of "révolte".<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Brunet-Weinmann, op. cit: 157.

In May 1941, Couturier evoked a now-extinguished flame; “nous avons connu en France les bienfaits de la liberté dans les arts et [...] nous voudrions les retrouver ici [...] nous appelons de tous nos vœux le retour de ces temps plus humains que le nôtre.” This entreaty was made in a francophone milieu which, from June 18, 1940, had been entrusted with a primary role in keeping the values and traditions of France alive. But by the same token, his words took their meaning in an environment which, if it accepted this responsibility, did so in profound struggle. The *Première exposition des indépendants* should perhaps be seen as one culminating point in a wider campaign of exhibitions, publications (articles, books and newspaper reports), radio commentaries and public lectures that helped transform the very tenor of artistic polemics in Québec, in support of the freedom of artistic action. In making sure that the exhibition took place at Québec City, Robert LaPalme’s own action may have had its most important consequence as a strike against academic institutions associated with an increasingly discredited order that had successfully alienated itself from the positions articulated by France Libre. In the same way, some reactionary institutions of Québec were positioned as inimical to Allied objectives in the war.

This had been an episode in a bloodless civil war involving representations of Québec’s identity. Those involved were galvanized and had chosen their affiliations. This episode foreshadowed LaPalme’s later career. At *Le Canada* after June 1943, he joined the direct prosecution of the war through a government-affiliated journal, and sharpened the “impertinence and insubordination” seen by Couturier as the mark of a society that can produce art of the highest order. Between May 1941 and his departure from Québec City,

LaPalme presented more exhibitions: solo shows devoted to Alfred Pellan and Louise Gadbois (with the work selected by Père Couturier). There were group shows as well; LaPalme kept up the CAS link, welcoming its annual exhibition in 1943.<sup>38</sup> But the most important of these projects (in terms of the links with France Libre and LaPalme's own career) was the *War Cartoons and Caricatures of the British Commonwealth* exhibition organized by Alan Reeve for Harold McCurry at the National Gallery of Canada, which LaPalme brought to Québec City in the Spring of 1942.

### **1.2. The *War Cartoons and Caricatures of the British Commonwealth* exhibition**

Presented in Ottawa in November 1941, this exhibition travelled through Canada in 1942 and thereafter to the United States (a direct participant in the War after Japan's attack on its naval bases at Pearl Harbor), where it circulated until 1945.<sup>39</sup> This exhibition featured works by many Canadian caricaturists, alongside works from artists in Britain, India, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and the Middle East. Among the Canadians, were Québec-based Arthur G. Racey (dean of caricaturists, at the *Montreal Star*), Harry Mayerovitch (then drawing for *Le Jour* as Mayo), John Collins of the *Montreal Gazette* and Robert LaPalme for *L'Action catholique*.

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<sup>38</sup> Varley, op. cit.: 41.

<sup>39</sup> Twenty-three different public sites - museums, art galleries, department stores, libraries and one book fair - received the exhibition between October 1942 and April 1945. See NGC Archives, NGC fonds, box 251, Ex 0349 file 2, 5.5W War Cartoons and Caricatures of the British Commonwealth 1941, "War cartoons exhibition" [Checklist of institutions receiving the exhibition in the United States, 1942-45].

By August 1941, LaPalme was clearly turning towards the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) as a source of exhibition programming. In a letter to NGC director H. O. (Harry) McCurry dated August 25<sup>th</sup>, he asked: “As soon as it is possible, will you please let me know the dates on which we can expect those exhibitions including the War Cartoons [....]”<sup>40</sup> On September 11<sup>th</sup>, McCurry replied : “The War Cartoons exhibition is not yet ready owing to delays in ocean transport but I will let you know when it is likely to be available for circulation”.<sup>41</sup> Some three months before the exhibition finally opened in Ottawa on November 13<sup>th</sup>, LaPalme was well apprised of the exhibition in its planning stages, for he had received an invitation to participate, in a letter dated July 8<sup>th</sup> and sent by the exhibition’s organizer, Alan Reeve.

Dear Mr. La Palme: -/ I am organizing an exhibition of the War Cartoons, Caricatures and Comic Art of the British Commonwealth, to be opened here at the National Gallery and then sent on loan to the other principal galleries of Canada and the United States. Mr Cloutier, of the Bureau of Information, tells me that you are a caricaturist. I wonder if you would be good enough to look through your drawings, to select half a dozen or so that you feel are representative, and that have a bearing upon the War, War conditions or War personalities, and to let us have them for the duration of the Exhibition?<sup>42</sup>

The exhibition had been conceived by Harry McCurry in the wake of the NGC’s involvement in the circulation of and exhibition of cartoons and caricatures by British caricaturist David Low at Ottawa in 1940, travelling through the United States in 1941.<sup>43</sup> At the end of May 1941, McCurry’s initial idea had taken shape. “What I am planning is

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., Robert LaPalme to H. O. McCurry. Excerpt of letter from McCurry files.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., McCurry to LaPalme, September 11, 1941. Excerpt of letter from McCurry files.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., Reeve to LaPalme, July 8<sup>th</sup> 1941.

an exhibition of war cartoons of the British Commonwealth including the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, India, South Africa and anything that may be of interest from Palestine and other territories.”<sup>44</sup> In the same month, McCurry, with the approval of NGC Chairman H. S. Southam, had asked Alan Reeve, a New Zealand national attached to the Canadian military as official caricaturist, to develop the exhibition.<sup>45</sup> Reeve won the appointment on the basis of his thorough knowledge of the works of cartoonists from most of the Commonwealth jurisdictions named by McCurry – although he was evidently less familiar with Canadian work, judging by his second-hand acquaintance with that of LaPalme. He was able to draw up shortlists of the leading cartoonists of each country and set about securing their works through contacts with national representatives. He worked mostly via diplomatic channels in New York. In the case of his native New Zealand, he wrote to the acting premier, putting his objective succinctly:

The purpose of the exhibition will be to demonstrate the solidarity of Empire War sentiment, as manifested through the cartoons, caricatures and comic art of Great Britain and the Dominions since the outbreak of the War. Great public interest will be aroused, and you will realise the value of such an Exhibition to the British cause in America.<sup>46</sup>

Reeve and McCurry set great store by the inclusion of works by David Low in this exhibition. Low’s caricatures were seen, because of their great wit, artistic quality and

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<sup>43</sup> *Exhibition of Original Cartoons and Caricatures by David Low*. Arranged in co-operation with the Art Exhibitions Bureau, London (Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, December 15th 1939- January 5th 1940; circulated January 16th 1940 – March 31st 1942).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., McCurry to Ruth Lawrence, May 29, 1941.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., McCurry, undated memo (on or after May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1941) documents two meetings with Reeve (May 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>) and the subsequent invitation “after consultation with the Chairman”.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., Alan Reeve to the Hon. Walter Nash, Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand, draft of letter sent June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1941. As a fellow New Zealander, Reeve was keen to have New Zealand well-represented: “I do hope that the New Zealand section will be worthy of our great black-and-white tradition.” The common



immense popularity, as supreme emblems of the very freedoms guaranteed by the presence of graphic political satire in Allied societies. The exhibition presented and circulated by National Gallery was organized by the Art Exhibition Bureau, a London-based association dedicated to disseminating British art overseas; the NGC dealt with the Bureau as a source of many exhibitions in the latter half of the 1930s and the early 1940s. The Bureau was based in wartime at the Royal Academy in London. The Low exhibition's evident popularity, a token of the immense popularity of caricature at this time in the English-speaking world, may well have provided the impetus for the Commonwealth-wide grouping. Ironically, Low himself would have none of this, and initially refused to let his works be presented as part of McCurry and Reeve's exhibition. "Since this is a War exhibition, the whole idea of a British Empire collection of fighting cartoons would, in my opinion, just encourage the pernicious belief that this is a war between nationalisms and not a world-wide struggle for ideas, as I am never done insisting." He also disliked participating in group exhibitions.<sup>47</sup> Low's intractability on this score was one of a number of nearly insuperable problems which faced Reeve, not least of which was the longstanding refusal of the British Ministry of Information (MoI), responsible for gathering and shipping the British contingent of works, to assist in circulating original drawings – in part, because of the risk of loss at sea in wartime. Reproductions were proposed instead, but Reeves' indignant entreaties and appeals to reason made it clear that the ideological and public relations impact could only be guaranteed by the presence of original drawings. In the end, the MoI secured and sent

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nationality with David Low, prince among political cartoonists in this era, was evidently a point of pride for New Zealand artists.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., David Low to C. R. Chisman, Art Exhibitions Bureau, August 8th 1941.

works by Anton Bairnsfeather, Zec, Vicky, Gilbert Wilkinson, David Langdon, Sherriff, Osbert Lancaster, Nicolas Bentley and Wyndham Robinson. Reeve was able to secure these alongside a small number of Low originals which appeared, as a compromise, in a separate “Britain at War” exhibition. McCurry’s acerbic comments on this outcome revolve around Low’s objections to national affiliation. They are worth considering here for what they reveal about McCurry’s motivating ideas:

Apparently he is willing to have his work shown in the Britain at War exhibition which is surely a national category. Our exhibition is called “War Cartoons and Caricatures of the *British Commonwealth*” [emphasis in the original] – not even the British Empire – and that is surely not a national category. We almost included the United States but they are not yet actually at war. We could as easily have called the exhibition War Cartoons and Caricatures of World Democracy because the British Commonwealth stands for just that and is the nucleus of the coming World Federation of free people [...] there is no question whatever on this side that the war is a struggle for right ideas in which nationalism plays an indispensable but subsidiary part. We do not wish to return the Low cartoons at this time because they are doing excellent work for the cause [...] <sup>48</sup>

The exhibition was opened on November 13, 1941, by HRH Princess Alice, whose husband was the then Governor General the Earl of Athlone, uncle to the King, George VI.<sup>49</sup> In her opening remarks, she asked: “Isn’t it right that in a total war our best artists should throw the whole weight of their talents into our united efforts? This is the more so

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., McCurry to Chisman [director of the Art Exhibitions Bureau, London], September 11<sup>th</sup> 1941.

<sup>49</sup> The official website for the Governor-General’s residence gives us the details: “Following the sudden death of Lord Tweedsmuir while in office, the Earl of Athlone, uncle of King George VI, was approached to assume the post of Governor General. There had been calls from government and the media for a Canadian Governor General, but Prime Minister Mackenzie King did not feel the time was right for this. Canada had been at war since 1939 and the country was adjusting to the difficulties of committing military personnel and materiel to the war against Nazi Germany. The trip to Canada with his wife, Princess Alice - a granddaughter of Queen Victoria - was complicated by the war, and their ship zigzagged across the Atlantic to avoid submarine attack. But they arrived safely in Halifax.”  
[http://www.gg.ca/gg/fgg/bios/01/athlone\\_e.asp](http://www.gg.ca/gg/fgg/bios/01/athlone_e.asp), verified on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006.

as it is recognized that the present conflict is quite as much a battle of ideas as of guns.”<sup>50</sup>

The sentiment effectively echoes those of both McCurry and Low.

Robert LaPalme participated in the exhibition with three drawings that had been published in *L'Action catholique: Le reich, Le chevalier* and *L'approche de la tempête* (Figure 4-3). A fourth drawing, 1776, belonging to a “M. Chaloult” – possible René Chaloult, the erstwhile Action libérale nationale member of the legislature – was not retained for the exhibition. *L'approche de la tempête* went on to achieve something of iconic status for LaPalme. It was described by Alan Reeve in the exhibition catalogue essay. Reeve grouped LaPalme with Toronto Financial Post cartoonist Crassick as the best of Canadian cartoonists: “LaPalme, a French-Canadian, brings a sense of decoration to his cartoons which helps to make his point in an original manner. His “L’Approche de la tempête”, in which two cave-men (Hitler and Mussolini) watch a storm approaching them over a lake (the storm clouds being the bars of the Star-Spangled Banner and bombers being the stars) is a lovely vignette.”<sup>51</sup> Reeve also mentioned Jack Booth of the Vancouver *Province* and John Collins of the Montreal *Gazette*, but found no words for the other Canadian artists, including Montreal’s Harry Meyerovitch, a regular of Jean-Charles Harvey’s *Le Jour*. Half the entry on Canada was given over to a disparaging assessment of unfortunate US cartooning influence on Canadian achievements.

LaPalme’s drawing, reflecting the increased US support for the Allies that fell short of

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<sup>50</sup> “Exhibit at National Gallery Opened by Princess Alice.” The Citizen, Ottawa (Ontario): November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1941. Clipping reproduced in NGC Documentation file – NGC Exhibitions 1944 – War Cartoons and Caricature

<sup>51</sup> Alan Reeve, War Cartoons and Caricatures of the British Commonwealth [typescript essay for exhibition catalogue] NGC Archives, NGC fonds, Box 251 EX 0349 File 1.: 9-11.

the declaration of war Britain and Canada hoped for so earnestly, was remarkably attuned to McCurry's aims.

LaPalme's role in bringing the exhibition to the Galerie Municipale de Québec also directly reflected this sympathy of aims. In late January 1942, LaPalme took up the matter of the circulation of the exhibition to Québec City. McCurry had offered the exhibition for late February 1942 in a letter dated December 1<sup>st</sup> 1941. With a month to go, LaPalme sought confirmation: "Please tell me if that date would be alright. We wish here to make this exhibition some war service affair. The commandant of Valcartier's training Center [sic] is ready to preside the opening."<sup>52</sup> LaPalme also enquired about costs for the exhibition. His query had come too late for February, but McCurry replied that the exhibition, booked for circulation until the end of March, would be available afterwards. Its cost, including shipping and insurance, was twenty-five dollars.

Catalogues were available at twenty-five cents each.<sup>53</sup> LaPalme promptly requested the exhibition for April, working on the precise inauguration date with McCurry throughout February. At month's end, in an aside, he mentioned to McCurry that "Our gallery has been lent to the Victory Loan campaign... our activities are postponed [sic]." The tone of his letters to McCurry became more and more informal, mixing in "cependant" and "au revoir"; "I am doing so much that I can hardly do it well."<sup>54</sup> On April 9<sup>th</sup>, LaPalme informed McCurry that "we are having a lecturer from France-Libre for the official

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<sup>52</sup> NGC Archives, NGC fonds, box 251, Ex 0349 file 2, 5.5W War Cartoons and Caricatures of the British Commonwealth 1941, LaPalme to McCurry, January 17<sup>th</sup> 1942.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., McCurry to LaPalme, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1942.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., LaPalme to McCurry, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1942.

opening on the 20<sup>th</sup>, of our exhibition of War Cartoons which will be held on the France-Libre behalf.” The France Libre committee had asked to see the catalogue, and LaPalme requested a dozen, with an eventual 200 to follow for the exhibition opening. In confirming their dispatch on April 16<sup>th</sup>, McCurry expressed regret “that no catalogues are available in the French language. The circulation of our exhibitions in the province of Quebec is growing but it is not yet sufficiently large to justify printing two editions of the catalogue but that time is coming I am sure.”<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, the first overtures were coming in from the United States, prompting McCurry to hope for a showing at the Museum of Modern Art, and for a strengthening of the British section, still missing major names such as Strube and Illingworth, and of course Low.<sup>56</sup> In late April, McCurry received word from the Art Exhibitions Bureau that Low would allow his work to be circulated in the US alongside *War Cartoons and Caricatures of the British Commonwealth* – simultaneously, that is, but separately.

While matters thus improved insofar as having Commonwealth caricature circulate as an emblem of Allied freedom in the United States, now that this country had declared war, the political aims of caricature were intriguingly conflicted at Québec City, as the conscription campaign waded across the efforts of the France Libre movement. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, LaPalme announced that he would return the unsold exhibition catalogues – all 211 of them (representing the 200 sent for the opening and 11 of the dozen sent for the France

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., McCurry to LaPalme, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1942.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., McCurry to Jan Juta, British Library of Information, New York, January 26<sup>th</sup> 1942.

Libre committee). "The exhibition was rather a flop for different reason. Coinciding with the plebiscite was none of the least. Except for the Great Britain section the wit is rather poor."<sup>57</sup> At the foot of the letter, LaPalme drew a perhaps startling image of himself, standing entirely naked, smoking a pipe, surrounded by unsold catalogues, with a sign announcing CATALOGUE/25c/3 pour 75c (Figure 4-4). Even more revealing was the correspondence which ensued. On May 12th, a letter arrived from S. Fielden Briggs, secretary of the France Libre committee, enclosing a cheque for thirty-two dollars, representing the exhibition fee of twenty-five dollars and seven dollars for the sale of twenty-eight catalogues. "As it had been arranged with your representative here, Mr. Robert LaPalme, the Free French Committee, after having held the exhibition of the 'War Cartoons and Caricatures of the British Commonwealth', is glad to send you the check here enclosed." The France Libre letterhead, bearing the familiar Croix de Lorraine and Saint Theresa d'Avila's motto "Mourir, oui!... capituler, jamais!" shows that the organization was housed at Palais Montcalm as well. Although LaPalme had early on referred to France Libre's involvement, he had maintained the Galerie municipale's identity as the convening organisation uppermost in the transactions with the National Gallery. Only now was it evident that the entire request for the exhibition had been planned as a France Libre activity from the outset.

This turn of events took McCurry and the board of trustees of the National Gallery by surprise, and they immediately returned the cheque, donating the twenty-five dollars

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., LaPalme to McCurry, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1942.

exhibition fee. A letter of appreciation duly followed on May 16<sup>th</sup> from the hand of France Libre's Québec district president, Madame André Simard, who wrote:

The Free French Committee and its members wish to convey to the organizers of the Cartoons Exhibition their very sincere thanks for their generous gift. It is always a great comfort for us every time we meet such comprehension and appreciation in our Allies and especially in our Canadian friends. We are indeed deeply moved by your friendly gesture towards our cause, the cause of these brave Free Frenchmen who keep on fighting our common enemy to liberate France and the world from slavery and barbarism.<sup>58</sup>

In a follow-up letter of June 6<sup>th</sup>, Robert LaPalme concluded: "We are very grateful for your generosity to France-Libre."<sup>59</sup>

When LaPalme first broached the participation of France Libre to McCurry, he referred to the presence of the commandant of the Valcartier training centre. In 1942, he undertook his first major mural painting cycle for this same centre, a representation of the weapons of war, at the behest of this "commandant", Adolphe Dansereau.<sup>60</sup> We will return to this series in section 4 of the present chapter, for it belongs to the narrative of LaPalme's post war exhibitions in Canada and overseas.

LaPalme's Galerie municipale exhibitions showed a committed engagement with the public role of art in its widest possible sense for the early years of the Second World War. LaPalme's actions brought him in close connection to notions of leadership throughout the fine arts, as an exemplar of values cherished overall by the Allies, and more

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., Madame André Simard, France Libre committee, to McCurry, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1942.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., LaPalme to McCurry, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1942.

specifically by the France Libre movement and the leading French personalities, active in New York, Montréal and Québec City, who openly supported its aims. After leaving Québec City in 1943 to join *Le Canada*, LaPalme brought with him a reputation garnered in the wider public realm and perhaps more importantly among the men and women running the many facets of the war administration in Canada. He became a byword for excellence and devastating wit in graphic satire, along the lines of David Low. Just as Low's cartoons were good for the cause, LaPalme's were intended to be likewise deployed against Maurice Duplessis as he returned to active campaigning in 1943. This next battle of the war would last for nearly sixteen years.

## **2. Robert LaPalme at Edmond Turcotte's *Le Canada*: conjuring the new national enemy**

### **2.1. Edmond Turcotte and the political contexts of *Le Canada***

Robert LaPalme's drawings began to appear at *Le Canada* under his own signature from June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1943. In April 1942, this newspaper definitively emerged from a complex period of reconciling visions of French and Quebecois political allegiance. LaPalme stayed for eight years, until the spring of 1951, when he crossed over to André Laurendeau and Gérard Filion's *Le Devoir*. *Le Canada*, its days by then numbered, began to shrink before disappearing altogether in 1953. The end of the Second World War and the beginnings of the postwar era marked the true end of any possibility for party

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<sup>60</sup> LaPalme (1997): 110.



newspaper ownership. This was clear from the fate of *Le Jour*, the radical Liberal paper headed by Jean-Charles Harvey. With Maurice Duplessis firmly returned to power after August 1944, the Liberal Party business establishment sought accommodation and stability. In June 1946, it scuttled its most extreme outpost as part of a more general peace. *Le Canada*'s own position after the War would effectively suffer in consequence of this compromise, and it would fall to *Le Devoir* to take up, after 1947, the critical position of autonomy and independent criticism in the face of power at both Québec and Ottawa. But in wartime, as an outlet for the expression of government influence, *Le Canada* occupied a clear position. Its *raison d'être* made it an emblem of the values defended by Canada's institutions. The newspaper was in a sense a cultural ambassador for the France that was lost under occupation and Marshal Pétain. At the artistic and literary level in particular, it broadcast a defence of modernist engagement which it had first nurtured during Olivar Asselin's tenure as editor from 1930 to 1935. Its enemies in the war years were *Le Devoir* (which, at the end of its first, clerico-nationalist era, was increasingly unable or unwilling to hide its fascist sympathies) and the politicians it championed, Maurice Duplessis and the Bloc Populaire. *Le Canada*'s champion was Edmond Turcotte, appointed editor on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1942.

Turcotte had succeeded Asselin for a first term in the editor's chair from 1934 to 1937, when he continued to promote the master's ideals, defending francophone identity by championing French culture and secular education without abandoning a Catholic world-view.<sup>61</sup> In the all-important resistance to totalitarianism, Turcotte, branded a communist

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<sup>61</sup> See Jean-Louis Gagnon's *Apostasies* II: 244 – 248, for a succinct presentation of Turcotte's life.

by Paul Bouchard and Jean-Louis Gagnon at *La Nation* in 1936, was almost alone among Québec Francophone newspaper editors (and in common with a wide segment of pro-Republican Anglophone Montreal around doctor Norman Bethune and jurist and poet Frank Scott) in denouncing the fascist-Catholic insurgency under Franco in the Spanish Civil War. Ironically, Turcotte was in agreement with Action nationale editor André Laurendeau, whom Turcotte would need to oppose vigorously for political reasons in 1943-44. In a further irony, Turcotte's anti-Franco editorial stance cost him his job at *Le Canada* in 1937, a time when the newspaper's patron, the federal government, was rather inclined towards a neutral stance in emulation of Great Britain's.<sup>62</sup> In 1937, the first administration of Maurice Duplessis was a year old. Cardinal Villeneuve, a close friend of Liberal Justice Minister Ernest Lapointe and the majority of the Quebec clergy were resolutely opposed to the Spanish Republican government's cause and wholeheartedly in favour of the most stringent restrictions on the spread of Communism. Duplessis's Padlock Act, warmly welcomed by the clergy, was the outstanding example of these restrictions. At *Le Canada*, Turcotte was succeeded by Eustache Letellier de Saint-Just, who gradually led the paper to a more conciliatory position with Premier Duplessis and the Church hierarchy in the context of late-1930s political reality in Québec.

As so often happened in these years, the falling from grace in one area of the political establishment, since it so often occurred as part of a necessary appeasement of Church opprobrium, could be balanced by redemption elsewhere. Turcotte found backing for a

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<sup>62</sup> Lavertu, op cit : 25 (n 22 , p 414). See also Edmond Turcotte, "Le feu à l'Espagne, prélude à l'incendie universel", *Le Canada* (August 24th 1936).

new newspaper, *Demain*.<sup>63</sup> Following its closure, he was recuperated into the Liberal wartime administration of Adelard Godbout, joining the economic reconstruction bureau at Télésphore-Damien (T.-D.) Bouchard's Ministère de la voirie et des travaux publics. Bouchard, MLA for Saint Hyacinthe, belonged firmly in the Liberal Party's progressive wing. Beaten in the leadership race by Adelard Godbout in the dying days of the Taschereau administration, he remained loyal as Godbout's lieutenant and represented the drive for reform within the party, paying special attention to curbing the influence of the clergy in political affairs.

In Bouchard's office, Turcotte acquired and developed a dossier indicting the secretive activities of the reactionary and pro-Vichy Ordre de Jacques Cartier, which linked leading politicians, civil servants and clergy. This dossier surfaced twice in Québec and Canadian politics. In the fall of 1941, Turcotte handed it to his friend Jean-Charles Harvey, who published it in *Le Jour*.<sup>64</sup> Later, in the spring of 1944, the newly appointed Senator T.D. Bouchard, head of the newly-nationalized Hydro-Québec, unveiled its contents in a Senate speech, thereby earning dismissal from Hydro-Québec, which was in any case denationalized by Duplessis later in 1944. It returned to symbolic importance under Jean Lesage and René Lévesque in 1962. In November 1941, among the most serious of this dossier's accusations was that the Ordre de Jacques Cartier was headed by none other than Cardinal Rodrigue Villeneuve, who, as we have seen previously, was a

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<sup>63</sup> Jean Hamelin and André Beaulieu give the following details: "Ce journal voué aux intérêts des travailleurs et des syndicats aurait été fondé par Edmond Turcotte, ex-rédacteur du *Canada*. Il aurait propagé des idées socialisantes. *Le Monde ouvrier* l'aurait absorbé en février 1938. On trouvera quelques indications sur ce journal dans *L'Unité* du 24 février 1938." *La Presse québécoise des origines à nos jours*, (vol 3): 109.

<sup>64</sup> Lavertu, op. cit.: 272-3.

key friend to Liberal Justice Minister Ernest Lapointe and who had thrown the Church's support behind the Federal government's prosecution of the War. The compromises and agreements with which Lapointe and Villeneuve secured one another's support, as Jean-Louis Gagnon has pointed out in his account of this period, can only be surmised.<sup>65</sup> Harvey's publication of the OJC report may well have troubled carefully negotiated agreements.

The press silence which certainly greeted this accusation, published on November 14, came in the midst of a series of broadcasts to Québec from Vichy France in November and December, extolling shared values between the two societies as exemplified by such heroes as Jeanne Mance, Marguerite Bourgeoys, Champlain, Frontenac and Jean Talon.<sup>66</sup> Villeneuve, perhaps under government pressure to clear his name and to pre-empt any further investigation into Turcotte's dossier, delivered an influential pro-France Libre broadcast to France from a Boston short-wave radio station on December 21, denouncing totalitarianism of all types and decrying the development at Vichy of a state-run corporatist system which, in the end, eschewed clerical involvement. Although Villeneuve would not attack Pétain directly, he thereby lent the Church's weight to a definitive critique of the Vichy régime.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Jean-Louis Gagnon, op. cit.: 81.

<sup>66</sup> Amyot, op. cit.: 203-204. In November and December of 1941, Radio Vichy was broadcasting to French Canadians, affirming that Vichy's Révolution nationale was based on the shining example of Québec society and affirmed shared values in *Famille, Travail, Patrie*; French-Canadian heroes were celebrated as exemplars of this spirit, namely Jeanne Mance, Marguerite Bourgeoys, de Vercheres, Champlain, Frontenac, Talon, among others.

<sup>67</sup> Amyot, op. cit.: 176-177. Cardinal Villeneuve broadcast to the French from Boston with a speech that was anti-Vichy although still pro-Pétain. He denounced totalitarianism of all types, including the one now

In these same weeks the situation in Ottawa was rapidly changing, following the death in November of Ernest Lapointe. Mackenzie King was now busy preparing for the plebiscite which would release his government from its promise not to introduce conscription. King had persuaded respected jurist Louis Saint-Laurent to stand for election at Québec-Est, the former riding of the late Justice minister and, from 1877 to 1919, of the legendary Wilfrid Laurier. Successfully fending off Paul Bouchard in the by-election, Saint-Laurent succeeded Lapointe as Minister of Justice, and as Québec lieutenant to King.<sup>68</sup> As the government unveiled the plebiscite designed to obtain national approval for what remained the *potential* introduction of conscription – “conscription if necessary, but not necessarily conscription” – Québec reactions, long threatened and masterfully controlled by Lapointe, erupted into full-fledged political turmoil. Dissenting Liberal MPs Maxime Raymond and Paul Cardin joined with former Action libérale nationale MP René Chaloult and *Action nationale* editor André Laurendeau to found the *Ligue pour la défense du Canada*, whose purpose was to campaign for the “No” side in the plebsicite. The growing strength of this movement and its impending success in securing a “No” majority within Québec was bolstered by support from *Le Canada* editor Eustache Letellier de Saint-Just. For this striking contravention of government war aims, Letellier de Saint-Just was duly relieved of his post. When Turcotte was brought back from public service to the editor’s chair on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1942, there were only two weeks to go before the plebiscite.

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prevailing in France – clearly unhappy, like many, at the development of a non-Christian corporatism, rather a state-run one.

<sup>68</sup> See Dale C. Thomson, *Louis Saint-Laurent: Canadian* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1967): 113.

The changes wrought by Turcotte were immediate. While the plebiscite was a lost cause as far as Québec was concerned, he rapidly brought the newspaper back to government policy lines and, as far as Québec's alliance of its identity with that of France (a key component of Olivar Asselin's example) to a clear France Libre position. Turcotte received personal thanks for his articles on this subject from de Gaulle himself.<sup>69</sup>

Turcotte then turned to articulate a representation of the French-Canadian position with respect to the postwar world. Published in 1942 but composed in the summer of 1941, before the second anniversary of the outbreak of war and in the wake of Germany's turning against the USSR (a change believed at the time by many to signal the hope for an eventual Allied victory), his *Reflexions sur l'avenir des canadiens français* reads like a personal and political manifesto that assesses his compatriots' social, economic and cultural situation.<sup>70</sup>

The eventual Allied victory was brought far closer with US entry into the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7 1941. American interest in Canada and Canadian war efforts underwent a rapid increase, due in great measure to the efforts of the Canadian government's Bureau of Public Information (1939-42, succeeded by the Commission for Public Information, 1942-45). This Bureau's activities had already been

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<sup>69</sup> At the recommendation of Elisabeth de Miribel; see Amyot, op. cit.: 213. The change elicited comment from Vichy's envoy in Canada, René Ristelhueber (Amyot 181): "En avril 1942, c'est au tour du Canada, sous la nouvelle direction d'Edmond Turcotte, de s'afficher ouvertement Gaulliste. D'après Ristelhueber, l'équilibre tenu par le journal libéral entre vichystes et gaullistes « a été brusquement rompu de la façon la plus complète, à la suite du changement intervenu dans la direction [...] depuis lors. Le Canada a adopté envers la France les sentiments du *Jour*. Ce ne sont qu'attaques directes ou allusions perfides dès qu'il s'agit du gouvernement du Maréchal" (See also Amyot 181, n 45).

strong enough that President Roosevelt had asked Canada to exercise restraint while the US was officially neutral. The Bureau had responsibility for disseminating what Mackenzie King termed “democratic information”, supporting the nation’s wartime morale and celebrating its war effort.

*Le Canada* underlined the Bureau’s efforts in an editorial on July 15 1943, paying specific attention to the dramatic increase of US coverage of Canadian affairs between April 1942 and April 1943 – an increase equivalent to 2000%.<sup>71</sup> Turcotte was well-placed to appreciate these efforts, for he had represented the essential ideas of his book *Réflexions sur l’avenir des canadiens français* in the New York-based *Foreign Policy Reports* of March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1943.<sup>72</sup> This journal devoted an entire issue to “What Canadians Think About Post-War Reconstruction”, a subject seen through articles representing Canada’s many regions. This approach had already been used by *Foreign Policy Reports* in issues devoted to soundings of American public opinion in 1942. Turcotte assessed the likelihood of French Canadians’ desire for isolationism after the war, sensing that French Canada would place itself at the juncture of three overlapping realms: the sphere of the United States, that of the British Commonwealth and, to a lesser degree but tellingly, that of the Pan-American Union. Indeed, the war brought about a general increase in bilateral relationships between Canada and Latin America as a whole; this period saw the beginning of Canadian diplomatic exchanges with South American nations. As we shall

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<sup>70</sup> Edmond Turcotte, *Réflexions sur l’avenir des canadiens-français* (Montréal, Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1942).

<sup>71</sup> “L’utilité de notre information.” Unsigned editorial in *Le Canada*, July 15 1943 p. 4

<sup>72</sup> Edmond Turcotte, “In French Canada.” *Foreign Policy Reports*, v XVIII number 24 [March 1, 1943] (New York, Foreign Policy Association, Inc., 1943): 313-316.

see, there were significant consequences for a rapprochement involving French Canadians, especially because of the importance of Québec – in the absence of France – for expatriate French communities in Mexico, Brazil and Argentina. Both Alfred Pellan and Robert LaPalme secured exhibitions in postwar Rio de Janeiro through their close contact with Canadian ambassador Jean Désy.

In 1943, at the request of the Canadian Information Bureau, Edmond Turcotte broadcast a message to the French people on the occasion of the birthday of General de Gaulle. The message was relayed via the BBC and the War Information Office broadcasting studio in New York City.<sup>73</sup> As for the United States, the state of opinion and politics in Québec with respect to its international role was by no means a matter of indifference; Turcotte also contributed “Tory Eyes on Québec” to the June 24 1944 issue of the left-wing weekly journal *The Nation* (New York), which had regularly presented brief notes on Québec since the election of Maurice Duplessis in 1936, doing much to foster the nascent perception of Duplessis and the Union nationale as proto-fascist, in line with the assessments of Canadian civil liberties proponents.<sup>74</sup> A type of circle was completed, for in the mid-1930s *The Nation* had sounded clarion calls against the perils of the European fascist régimes, republishing and popularizing David Low’s political caricatures. Almost alone at the time, these cartoons had dared to ridicule totalitarian Germany, Italy and

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<sup>73</sup> “Message à la France”. *Le Canada*. 23 November 1943: 4.

<sup>74</sup> See James H. Gray, “Canada Flirts with Fascism”, *The Nation* (October 9 1935): 406-208; T. E. Wood, “Canada’s War Election”, *The Nation* (November 18, 1939): 551-554; Henry Montcalm (pseud.), “Quebec: Unhealthy for Reformers”, *The Nation* (December 2, 1950): 506-558. Sandra Djwa’s biography of Frank Scott, *The Politics of the Imagination: A Life of F. R. Scott* (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1987) provides a comprehensive background to the civil rights situation of Québec throughout these years.



Spain, and the appeasing governments of Great Britain and France. Turcotte's distinction was to fulfill the polemical recipe of Olivar Asselin and reaffirm the value of a newspaper that combined information, defence of secular culture, and caricature. In 1943-44, Turcotte assembled a journalistic team that included Robert LaPalme and Jean-Louis Gagnon. All three set the stage for the polemical battles that would ensue throughout the years 1943-59 as Maurice Duplessis came to dominate the political landscape of Québec and to symbolize, for Turcotte and later for André Laurendeau, the need to continue the war against the totalitarian impulse in Québec politics.

## **2.2. Duplessis and Laurendeau take centre stage**

By early 1943, both the Union nationale and the new Bloc populaire had launched the long campaigns for public support that presaged the provincial election which must come in 1944.

The Bloc populaire launched its campaign with a rally on January 27 at the marché Saint-Jacques in Montreal.<sup>75</sup> The Bloc's origins lay in the 1942 conscription plebiscite and the successful efforts of the Ligue pour la défense du Canada to obtain an overwhelming No vote in Québec. After April 26<sup>th</sup>, the Ligue remained the focus for nationalist aspirations. It scored another success through its support for MP René Chaloult, who had taken part in an anti-conscription rally in May and was charged by the Canadian solicitor-general under the Rules for the Defense of Canada. Chaloult was tried without jury, contrary to a

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similar trial of an English-Canadian dissenter in Ontario. The Ligue raised money through subscription to publicize its cause. This publicity demonstrated the strength of the subscription base and avowed that Chaloult, because of his identity, could not receive justice. On his acquittal in August, the atmosphere of triumph strengthened the resolve of Ligue members to definitively organize a new political organisation. Its purpose would be to represent French-Canadian interests in parliament, and to by-pass a now discredited and corrupt party-political system which had a stranglehold on the mechanisms and the representations of power. In particular, André Laurendeau understood that the cause of nationalism and political action required the organisation of this political party. So did Paul Gouin, leader of the erstwhile Action Libérale Nationale.<sup>76</sup> Chaloult, Gouin and Laurendeau asked Lionel Groulx to intercede and persuade Maxime Raymond to take the helm of this party. Having been a Liberal MP since 1925, and a loyal member of the Québec leadership held together by Ernest Lapointe through thick and thin, Raymond resigned from the Liberal Party when the 1937 and 1939 promises on conscription were betrayed by the introduction of the plebiscite legislation. He was thus seen as the legitimate claimant to leadership of the Bloc populaire.

Yet the establishment of a new party in 1942 evoked memories of 1936, when Paul Gouin's Action Libérale Nationale (ALN), itself a breakaway from the provincial Liberals, was outmanoeuvred by Maurice Duplessis after its fusion with his Conservative Party to form the Union nationale. The failure of this earlier endeavour had persuaded

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<sup>75</sup> Donald J. Horton, *André Laurendeau: French-Canadian Nationalist, 1912-1968* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>76</sup> Denis Monière, *André Laurendeau et le destin d'un peuple* (Montréal : Québec-Amérique, 1983) : 145.

many nationalists that parliamentary representation was a hopeless waste of time – leading several to anti-democratic positions similar to those espoused by the far-right press in France. Gouin, Chaloult and Edouard Lacroix were the veterans of this earlier betrayal; they supported Raymond on this occasion but were also ready to break away and form their own party if necessary. As Denis Monière writes in his biography of André Laurendeau,

Le Bloc est à l'origine un parti de chefs qui s'est donné, après sa fondation le 8 septembre 1942, une organisation de masse pour soutenir son action électorale. La mystique du chef deviendra sa grande faiblesse dans la mesure où Maxime Raymond n'était pas en mesure d'assumer cette fonction. La grave maladie de Raymond permit aux dissensions intérieures de se manifester, ce qui désorienta les militants et les électeurs.<sup>77</sup>

Raymond concentrated his efforts at Ottawa, and René Chaloult became the most active spokesman in Québec during 1942 and 1943. André Laurendeau was appointed general secretary of the Bloc on 23 December 1942, taking the lead spokesman's role once Philippe Hamel, Paul Gouin and René Chaloult broke with the party in October 1943 over the influence of Edouard Lacroix.<sup>78</sup>

As we will see, Laurendeau would come to play the key role in LaPalme's career after 1951 at *Le Devoir*. But nine years earlier, he too was the enemy. Thirty years old on becoming General Secretary of the Bloc, Laurendeau had already distinguished himself as a young nationalist leader. Founder of the Jeune-Canada and editor of *L'Action nationale* (founded in 1933) from 1937, Laurendeau was motivated, like many of his

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>78</sup> Black, op. cit: 272.

generation, by a powerful sense of the injustice experienced by French Canadians within Confederation. His earliest political positions appeared to place him in the right or far-right radical position that critiqued the established political order of the Liberal administrations at Québec City. Yet he was also open to the ideas of Jacques Maritain, and after a sojourn in France in 1935 and 1936, returned to Québec deeply distressed at the realities of fascist political régimes in Europe and marked by the new personalist, social-Catholic ideas defended by the magazines *L'Esprit* and *Sept*, to which *La Relève* provided the closest echo in Québec. Laurendeau eventually came to disavow the fascist and communist solutions to rampant capitalist individualism. He reformulated his nationalism in a progressive social agenda which brought him closer to a Christian Left as promulgated by Emmanuel Mounier at *L'Esprit*. On his return to Canada, Laurendeau's editorial against Franco in *L'Action nationale* was, with Edmond Turcotte's, among the few voices of support for the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War.<sup>79</sup> In 1943 and 1944, however, Laurendeau had passed from the mechanisms of national education to those of party politics. In wartime, this opposition to the Liberal establishment that was prosecuting the war came to automatically place two otherwise sympathetic thinkers in opposing camps.

As for the Union nationale, its leader Maurice Duplessis launched a vigorous and well-prepared campaign to regain power with a resounding speech given on February 16, 1943.<sup>80</sup> Duplessis was convalescing from a lengthy illness brought on by alcoholism and

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<sup>79</sup> *L'Action nationale*, January 1937: 42, reprinted in Monière, op. cit.: 94.

<sup>80</sup> Black, op.cit : 262-265.

diabetes. He resolved to push forward, teetotal, back to the premier's office. His relationship with alcohol and women had been well-known among journalists during his first government. In his new guise he was careful to forgo both, devoting himself to the disciplined pursuit of power.<sup>81</sup> His changed identity (he effectively became a confirmed bachelor), would in due time offer much scope to Robert LaPalme for comic manipulation. In 1943, Duplessis had not only to fight Adelard Godbout's Liberals, but also to fend off the Bloc populaire which was determined to lump the Union Nationale with the Liberals as the discredited old parties that had never truly served Québec. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1943, the UN and the Bloc criss-crossed the province, with Duplessis holding large rallies every Sunday from August through October.<sup>82</sup> The inner divisions of the Bloc, having erupted in October, continued to plague the party throughout the winter of 1944. Three figureheads remained visible. They were the Bloc's federal leader, Maxime Raymond, André Laurendeau and the venerable Henri Bourassa, joining active campaigning as of the August 1943 by-election which brought the first Bloc MP to Ottawa. This campaign was managed for the Bloc by a young politician named Jean Drapeau, who had also appeared alongside Bourassa and Laurendeau in the 1942 plebsicite campaign. *Le Devoir*, the newspaper founded by Bourassa in 1910, gave its greatest support to the Bloc by virtue of the party's origins in the anti-conscriptionist movement. At *Le Canada*, Robert LaPalme's caricatures and the editorials would carefully keep the reader's attention focused on the Bloc's

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.: 272.

overabundance of leaders, on the figures of Bourassa, Raymond and above all Laurendeau, and on *Le Devoir* itself.

In the election triangle of 1944, each of the three principal parties sought to paint the other two as being in cahoots with one another. *Le Canada* and Robert LaPalme certainly attempted to paint the UN and the Bloc as such, alleging that unions (often unnatural ones) took place between André Laurendeau and Maurice Duplessis, even though these unions had basis neither in fact nor in ideological possibility. Duplessis's chief strategy was barnstorming oratory, which depended heavily on extreme exhortations and atrocious puns. Through a verbal caricaturing process, he fused Godbout's Liberals and Laurendeau's Bloc Populaire. Duplessis portrayed them as joint inheritors of the Taschereau administration and as enemies of Québec's interests (the Bloc through the former Liberal Raymond, who was thus accused of having supported conscription!) Duplessis also accused the Liberals of promulgating anticlericalism because of the actions of T.-D. Bouchard; as we have seen, Bouchard, as Edmond Turcotte's patron, encouraged the exposure of the Ordre Jacques Cartier; he certainly made himself the enemy of overweening Church influence. In an atmosphere of polemics engaged through attribution of guilt by association, the recourse to powerful visual caricature would enable the personification of guilt and the construction of an identity for the enemy. Robert LaPalme was, in a sense, the Liberal establishment's best answer to Duplessis.

### 2.3. Robert LaPalme defines the enemy

LaPalme appears to have made a first brief appearance at *Le Canada* on February 15 1943. Unlike all his contributions from June 10<sup>th</sup> onwards, this drawing was featured on the front page – alongside a report on a speech, given by premier Adélard Godbout at an evening organized by Cardinal Villeneuve, on “Le catholique face à la guerre”. The drawing was exactly in keeping with LaPalme’s style at *L’Action catholique*, although (as has been pointed out by Esther Trépanier) it echoes in content a caricature published in the Montreal Standard of January 16 and drawn by Harry Meyerovitch, signing as Mayo.<sup>83</sup> Showing Adolf Hitler in the uncomfortable embrace of a dancing Russian bear in a snowy landscape, the drawing is signed with letters that spell out, depending on the order in which they are read, “RicRac”, or caRic (the latter possible since it forms the first two syllables of the word “caricature” ). The drawing may be an homage to the French satirical weekly, *Ric et Rac*, which had decamped to Clermont-Ferrand; its anti-German material landed at least one contributor in a concentration camp in 1944.<sup>84</sup> Still at *L’Action catholique*, LaPalme would presumably have been under an exclusivity contract and unable to use his own name; it would not be the only occasion on which he would resort to a pseudonym.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> I am grateful to Esther Trépanier for drawing this precursor drawing to my attention in the context of the doctoral defence of this thesis.

<sup>84</sup> Claude Bellanger et al., eds., *Histoire générale de la presse française. Tome IV : de 1940 à 1958* (Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1975). p 71. The deported cartoonist was Jean-Bernard Aldebert. See [http://www.lambiek.net/artists/b/bernard-aldebert\\_jean.htm](http://www.lambiek.net/artists/b/bernard-aldebert_jean.htm) and [http://apella.ac-limoges.fr/lp-stexupery-limoges/travaux/04\\_05/oradour/conf.htm](http://apella.ac-limoges.fr/lp-stexupery-limoges/travaux/04_05/oradour/conf.htm) for examples of his graphic work. One of the few survivors of the Gusan concentration camp, Aldebert published an illustrated account of his experience in *Chemin de croix en 50 stations* (Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1946).

<sup>85</sup> See LaPalme (1997): 82. and, below, Gabo in 1944.

From June 10<sup>th</sup> onwards, LaPalme's drawings were featured in the top right-hand corner of the editorial page, page 4, across two columns. The majority of his caricatures in the first months of his tenure at *Le Canada* dealt with the war; Québec and Canadian politics rarely featured until August, and then only insofar as they concerned Canada's relationship with Britain. Maurice Duplessis first appeared as an "Indian Chief", annoying a bemused Winston Churchill. In *Nos belles traditions indigènes*, the "Chef de la tribu des U.N.", Maurice Duplessis, dressed only in a revealing loincloth and a twin-feather headdress, bows before a cigar-toting Winston Churchill on a throne (Figure 4-5). LaPalme's drawing is undular yet compact. As he bows from his kneeling position, Duplessis slams his long, pointy nose painfully into the floor. He asks the "Great Onontio" to save him from the threat of independence of the wicked Outaouais. The caption refers to Duplessis's request for intercession by the British Parliament following Mackenzie King's delay in implementing the redistribution of several Québec ridings, a downward adjustment made necessary by the population drop revealed in the 1940 Census. The redistribution required assent in London through the terms of the British North America Act. King's reasons for delay concerned the issue of national unity and stability in wartime. He knew that even a mandated adjustment in Québec carried political overtones that could have been injurious to the political situation in a province which had just faced a divisive plebiscite. Nonetheless, the effect of this decision played into Duplessis's hands, for it was reformulated as a principal grievance, and the delay as evidence of Godbout-King collusion.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> The full story is recounted in Black, op. cit: 268-270.



Duplessis had sent a telegram to Churchill alleging that these actions represented the suspension of freedoms guaranteed by the 1941 Atlantic Charter, and further sent a copy to King. Within days, a flotilla of supporting telegrams was despatched to Churchill from Ottawa. They were coordinated by Jean Drapeau, who had campaigned alongside André Laurendeau and Henri Bourassa during the plebsicite and who would organize Laurendeau's campaign in the 1944 federal election. This was one of the first instances of coordination between agents of the Bloc populaire and the Union Nationale. *Le Canada* duly commented with a dismissive editorial on July 17<sup>th</sup>. In "M. Duplessis, Bloody Colonial", *Le Canada* reminded readers that Canada had enjoyed, since the 1931 Statute of Westminster, total autonomy as a nation; only matters pertaining to the country's constitution required assent from the British parliament, and this was given as a matter of formality upon request from the Canadian government. Petitions from opposition leaders in the provinces were simply evidence of their own colonial mentality.<sup>87</sup>

LaPalme's cartoon came three days later, on the eve of an extraordinary session in London which rushed through the boundary changes. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, LaPalme's drawing mocked Duplessis's reputation as the Chef by equating him with chieftainship in First Nations social organisation. This attributed a ridiculous and subservient role to the British Crown, in contrast, presumably, to the proud autonomy of the government at Ottawa. The equation of this surrogacy with ridicule was also directly identified with the almost nude male figure of Duplessis.

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<sup>87</sup> "M. Duplessis, Bloody Colonial" [unsigned editorial]. *Le Canada*, July 17 1943: 4.

LaPalme's drawing was still comparatively tame, signalling neither the preponderant role Duplessis would come to occupy in *Le Canada's* and LaPalme's universe, nor the graphic inventiveness which he triggered in LaPalme's artistic approach. LaPalme's line was still relatively uniform, with compositional elements grouped around a focal point that gives the image the tone of a compact gag. But some important elements of LaPalme's future repertoire were already present: Duplessis is subordinate or usurping, unworthy of power; his physical body is revealed and manipulated to produce ridicule; the nose is accorded a humorous role.

The repertoire quickly became more complex both in graphic and thematic terms over the next nine months, from November 1943 to August 1944. LaPalme established all of the major routes of the polemical and satiric engagement with Duplessis that he would deploy until Duplessis's death in 1959. It was in this work that LaPalme effectively developed his unique contribution to the graphic satirical tradition in Québec. As we shall see, the drawings and texts of his caricatures after late 1943 are enriched with layered references to a wide array of cultural narrative forms, both visual and written, as well as to specific explicit political realities, to wider social concerns and anxieties which formed the often covert basis of the major parties' political programmes, and to the increasingly overt basis and content of evolving Québec artistic expression.

We have been concerned until now to carefully account for the political, ideological and artistic parameters of LaPalme's production. Questions of identity have been paramount. As LaPalme's production became more complex both in terms of its range of subjects

and its internal organization, so did its own accounting of the role and uses of identity in framing political, aesthetic and social discourse in Québec. The extent of this complexity can be best revealed by considering the 1943-44 production in two ways: first, as a narrative arc whose goal was to persuade readers of the unsuitability of Duplessis for power, and whose ending posited Duplessis's failure to win it anew at the impending provincial election. This arc developed a caricatural Duplessis character who could be attacked through language, graphic rendering, and his deployment in fictitious situations which leads to his being ridiculed or denigrated. He was increasingly accompanied in this development by Bloc populaire leader André Laurendeau. Like animated cartoon characters such as Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck, very present at this time through serial appearances in movie theatres, Duplessis and Laurendeau sometimes appeared on their own, sometimes together, in a variety of situations.

It was also in 1943-44 that LaPalme began to intervene directly as a presence within his caricature realm, either as observer, commentator or subject. He might draw himself into a given situation or appear through additional inscriptions which begin to restructure the caricature's space. He quoted from other forms of newspaper visual content, particularly from comics or illustrated daily syndicated information panels. The lessons gleaned from his work elsewhere, particularly as a mural painter, were applied to the evolving morphology of his figures. And while his style had been distinctive from the outset of his career, marking his images with an authorial personality, it underwent a further, almost liberating transformation, by coming repeatedly into contact with Maurice Duplessis.

The importance of text increased in this period as well. Until 1943, text had been restricted to the title function, through title and subtitle, with the latter varying between an explication of the title as mediated through the image, on the one hand, and assertion of the internal dialogue taking place, on the other. Now, text invades the internal space of the caricature. Space itself varies between an evocation of logical perspective, and symbolic, diagrammatic organization. The effect is to focus our attention more and more on the enriched quality of LaPalme's graphic line, which now reaches again to the virtuosity demonstrated between 1933 and 1938.

After July 20 1943, Duplessis did not reappear as a subject until December 3<sup>rd</sup>. After this date he was scarcely absent from *Le Canada*'s page 4 editorial cartoons. The bulk of 1943 was given over to cartoons supportive of the war effort of Québec within Canada. The workings of Québec-France identity links remained important. On July 14, France's symbol Marianne attacked the Nazi eagle with a broken sword; "Ce n'est pas le coeur qui manque" (Figure 4-6). With leadership of the Algeria-based Free French forces shared from March through September 1943 by de Gaulle and General Giraud – a partnership agreed between the two generals, Britain, Canada and the US thanks to delicate negotiations in the face of US suspicion of de Gaulle – LaPalme could draw a cheerful Giraud rooster on July 17 (Figure 4-7). On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, an Uncle Sam so tall that he surpasses the upper limit of the cartoon frame admonishes a seated Franklin D. Roosevelt holding a Marianne doll with a French flag: "Rappelons nous, Franklin, qu'elle est très fière et que le monde nous jugera aux égards que nous saurons lui témoigner dans le malheur" (Figure 4-8). On the 28<sup>th</sup>, following the fall of Mussolini, newly-polite German

soldiers in Paris observe courtesies towards a famished French woman and her malnourished child (Figure 4-9). Mussolini's overthrow was symbolized the previous day by the cast shadow of an overweight figure on a hangman's gallows, in a prison cell where Hitler and Hirohito are told "Next" by an Allied soldier (Figure 4-10). LaPalme was to return to the gallows's shadow for Duplessis in 1952 (Figure 4-11). Hirohito, Franco, Salazar, Pierre Laval and Hitler gaze with worry at the decapitated head of Mussolini on August 3<sup>rd</sup> (Figure 4-12).

The Bloc Populaire's efforts at restricting Canadian participation in the war were ironically treated the next day. Bloc leaders Maxime Raymond and René Chaloult complain about rationing as they sit down to a conspicuously unrationed meal. "Tous ces rationnements, c'est effrayant!" says Laurendeau, brandishing a copy of *Le Bavoire* – "the spittoon," the French word euphoniously akin to its model, *Le Devoir*. Chaloult continues, "Heureusement que l'encre n'est pas rationnée!" (Figure 4-13). Three days later, a young man stands on a *Bloc populaire block* – clearly identified with the Bloc logo – haranguing an invisible crowd, expostulating, spit ejaculating from his mouth. He is given the simian features familiar to caricatures of Irish and African subjects throughout British French and North American caricature since the 19<sup>th</sup> century – wide-set eyes, small, pug-like nose being long entrenched emblems of stupidity and cowardice (Figure 4-14).<sup>88</sup> Behind him, in a symbolic backdrop, an armed soldier in action calls on him: "Aïe! Popuant! Un petit coup de coeur au lieu d'un grand coup de gueule, veux-tu!"

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<sup>88</sup> See L Perry Curtis, "Simianizing the Irish Celt", in *Apes and Angels* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971): 29-57; and Martha Banta, "Origins", in *Barbaric Intercourse. Caricature and the Culture of Conduct, 1841-1936* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003): 19-71.

The young Bloc supporter is characterized as a shirker. The term “Popuant” unites two terms. The first, Popu, abbreviates the adjective Populaire that goes with the noun Bloc. Its antecedent was an earlier denigration, in 1930s France, of Léon Blum’s Front Populaire. The second constituent term, Puant, signifies “stinking”. Yet the whole is ironic, since the young thug does not contribute to the war effort. He is “pas puant”, he does not sweat for the cause. The capacity of political invective to transfer an emblem across the ideological spectrum (with the Bloc representing the ideological nemesis of the Front Populaire) is perhaps just another example of well-researched government management of information. This case is certainly similar to the deployment, in aid of the 1941 war bonds issue, of Henri Julien’s *Vieux de ’37* figure, itself an emblem of the failed rebellion of the Patriotes in 1837-1838 (in the name, of course, of the march towards Confederation, according to an article by Marius Barbeau).<sup>89</sup> The triple-layered pun is a sign of things to come with LaPalme.

The fusion of such historical Québec figures to wartime events continued on August 21, on the occasion of the Québec conference that brought together US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill. Along with Mackenzie King, they are represented by LaPalme as Wolfe, Frontenac and Champlain (Figure 4-15).<sup>90</sup>

LaPalme returned to the Bloc’s activities in October 1943, opening a general denigration.

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<sup>89</sup> The reader is referred to our earlier work on the political caricature of Henri Julien . See “Drawn to Order: Henri Julien’s Political Cartoons of 1899 and his career with Hugh Graham’s Montreal Daily Star, 1888-1908” (unpublished MA dissertation; Peterborough (Ontario): Trent University, 1998), especially Chapter 5, “The posthumous fate of Henri Julien and his 1899 political cartoons” (148-175).

<sup>90</sup> For a precise account of the workings of the 1943 Quebec Conference, see J. W. Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record. Volume I: 1939-1944* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960): 527-60 and passim.

Rather than engaging with specific policies or actions, LaPalme began to associate his victims to a fictitious universe that was by turns evil and ridiculous. Most of these drawings played on the image of a block. Whether opened or closed, revealing its foul contents, it could just as easily become a decorative motif for dresses worn by André Laurendeau as a Spanish dancer. On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, two workmen remove a panel from a large block, unleashing, vermin, insects, reptiles and snakes from an oozing, dark, vaporous cropophilic mass (Figure 4-16). On the 25<sup>th</sup>, an inebriated Bloc-head complains that there are too many heads in the Bloc. As he swoons, various portraits of Bloc leaders fuse with the furniture in a pseudo-surrealist concoction (Figure 4-17). The reference to the visual order of surrealist images recurred frequently starting in 1944. LaPalme's willingness to push at the edges of accepted taste – picturing excrement and alcoholic excess – now recurred more and more frequently, especially with respect to sexual relations. A November 20 cartoon on wartime vocabulary showed passengers in a crowded bus. Its design focuses the reader's attention on an angry woman remonstrating with a deeply embarrassed, taller man: "Vous, cessez vos attaques de flanc... espèce de commando!" Something about the man has poked into the woman's "flanc", a not unlikely consequence in a crowded Montreal bus (Figure 4-18). Not unlike the seaside postcard humour of British visual humourist Donald McGill, LaPalme found a way to introduce the frankly naughty into his social and political commentary.

That LaPalme was now working in full possession of his inventive capacities was also signalled by the variety of his approaches, especially in his Duplessis caricatures of 1943. By multiplying references to other artistic forms, he quickly enlivened his own repertoire

and drew links between the newspaper caricature and these other forms. On November 23, Duplessis appears as an Arcimboldo-like fruit arrangement in “Nature morte et... Nationale” (Figure 4-19). LaPalme has set a small inscription in a balloon linked to his signature by an arrow, “candidat” to the initials C.R.C.A – thus Candidat au Royal Canadian Academy, sending up the academic nature of still life work and doubly layering its spoof in this cartoon. The positioning of the pun in the last word of the title, following three suspension points, also hearkens back to Olivar Asselin’s editorials at *Le Canada* some ten years earlier. This still life, placed on a nondescript serviette, is completed by a bottle of alcohol, a woman’s high heel shoe and an open padlock – a multi-layered reference to Duplessis’s Padlock law, to the presumed lost chastity of the shoe’s owner, and to Duplessis’s own reputation as a womanizer and alcoholic. Although Duplessis had foresworn these temptations in private life, LaPalme would make hay of their markers until well into 1944.

The strategy soon became particularly important in his renditions of Duplessis and Laurendeau, as was evident from Duplessis’s reappearance on November 29, in honour of Saint Catherine’s Day. “La Sainte Catherine”, like Sadie Hawkins Day a carnivalesque celebration in late November that allows single women to chase, claim and marry eligible, single men, is also a religious celebration. In “La Sainte Catherine... entre célibataires”, Duplessis addresses a gathering of spinsterish ladies all united in admiration for him (Figure 4-20). What might his large nose promise? “Oui, ma chère, je vous le dis que je vais le vendre mon vote, moi... et pas pour de l’argent non plus!” The drawing is remarkable for its linear-graphic organization. The emboldened LaPalme has allowed



himself a departure from recent practice by strengthening the expressive and semantic potential of his brushwork, as a single stroke draws out the contour of the coat-shoulders of five of the six assembled female listeners.

LaPalme returned to the nose as a source of semantic play on December 1<sup>st</sup>, examining six uses of the syllable *Né* (Figure 4-21). The syllable, and its referent (Duplessis's nose), were announced as synecdoche: standing in for the fuller, and differently spelled "nez", and signalling six words which could usefully be associated with Duplessis: *néfaste*, *néantise*, *néanmoins*, *néophobe*, *négociation*, *négrier*. Titled "À la manière du Coin des Enfants", the drawing becomes an *imagier*, in the manner of an illustrated vocabulary guide for children. The six images have been organized in two registers. In the upper register, Duplessis faces left, centre and right in sequence. The left hand frame "néfaste" presents a jutting nose adorned with flag, flowers and festoons; the *nez* is *faste*, either fulfilled and happy if an adjective, or the exemplar of magnificence if a noun. But the whole is nefarious, boding ill. In the centre, *néantise* is a state of nothingness; seen head-on, Duplessis crosses his eyes over the bridge of his deeply foreshortened nose. At the right, *néanmoins*, nevertheless, has become "a nose in less." The bust head of Duplessis ends at the nose; the violence done to his body here would find a more brutal expression on April 10<sup>th</sup>. On the lower register, the left hand *néophobe* is averse to change; Duplessis's nose takes the place of an electricity pole, holding up the wire-and-isolator junction. A nearby lone electric bulb shines. *Le Canada* was preparing the public campaign to bolster Adelard Godbout's plans to nationalize the Montreal Heat, Light and Power facility. Long T.D. Bouchard's dream, this plan had been in place since the 1936

election when Duplessis came to power on pledges to carry out just such a plan – pledges that had quickly proved illusory. The reason might well be the subject of the middle panel, *négociation*, in which Duplessis accepts a backhander from the Trust – precisely the accusation which had followed his post-election abandonment of hydro privatization in 1936. The resistance to the new in the form of nationalization was itself synecdochal for the association of Duplessis to all that was reactionary during his first term; prophetic, too, since he would become emblematic of the same quality throughout his four governments of 1944-59. Finally, *négrier* shows the nose of the sleeping Duplessis going black under the burning desert sun. With its connotation of deserts, slave-driving and trading, this final image picked up on Duplessis's reputation in government, and also signalled the association with negritude which was a common recourse of Québec caricatural satire since the nineteenth century. It would find a special resonance in the Québec polemical tradition, from Henri Julien's *Songs of the By-Town Coons* through André Laurendeau's "Théorie du roi nègre" editorial of 1958, and Pierre Vallières's pamphlet *Nègres blancs d'Amérique*. LaPalme had quickly captured some of the meaning that would depend on Duplessis's negotiation of Québec "national" identity. The very importance accorded to nationalism, nationality and the national, like a catechism, would itself be held up to satiric consideration.

LaPalme lost no time in deploying his newfound inventiveness. On December 4<sup>th</sup>, Duplessis returned to the *Coin des enfants* (Figure 4-22). This time, a cutout Maurice dressed only in t-shirt, boxer shorts, socks, garters and shoes was clad with four different identities; a "national" costume, a white coat with ceinture fléchée; a suit for meeting

workers; a morning suit for “Rue St Jacques”; and a dressing gown and pyjamas for “Château Frontenac”, where he kept a private apartment throughout his parliamentary career. Such references to printed visual culture soon varied.

In a pastiche of a classic Rube Goldberg invention, an untitled drawing published on December 7<sup>th</sup> placed Duplessis at the wheel of a broken-down jalopy, two tires lanced, his nose tied to a contraption which controls Bloc Populaire members sitting in the rear seat (Figure 4-23). Each of the component actions or pertinent vehicle parts is lettered, and the corresponding functions are explained in a legend which nestles alongside the central drawing’s outline. Without title or subtitle, this text/image is apparently self-sufficient, all the textual information hand-lettered as part of the graphic whole:

Le Dr Hamel A trahit les intérêts du Boss Lacroix B qui en colère, agite les épaules, ce qui met en saccade la brimaballe C au bout de laquelle une poivrière D secouée, poivre les narines nationales E les faisant éternuer dans la voile F qui gonflée de vent pimenté, fait avancer la bagnole nationale G vers une destination encore inconnue, mais toujours nationale - .

LaPalme credits Rube Goldberg above his signature (“D’après Goldberg”). The outlandish system has Duplessis’ nose as the source of peppered, sneeze-filled wind. The satiric power of the drawing plays on its model’s own lampooning of scientific diagrams that illustrate the workings of patented machines; the culture of illustrated factual reporting is posited as inherently absurd, by adapting its serious demonstration to impossible or utterly fantastical inventions. LaPalme thereby paid homage to Rube Goldberg’s own satiric powers and included Duplessis and the Bloc populaire’s complex mutual history and unlikely renewed association (Hamel and Lacroix having been

purportedly betrayed by Duplessis in 1936) in the order of such fantastical occurrences. The *narines nationales* bear a deeply imbedded pun on the term *marine nationale*. The question of Canada's navy had been instrumental in the 1911 election that brought down the federal Liberal government of Wilfrid Laurier; this election had also marked a triumph for the anti-imperialist policies of Henri Bourassa, who had effectively campaigned on the navy question. The nationalist sails were still, perhaps, fed by breezes from such long-ago combats, hopelessly outdated against the realities of Canada's participation in the second World War.

Two days later, LaPalme turned to another graphic system, *Ripley's Believe it or Not!*, a widely syndicated single panel image which also dealt with seemingly outlandish facts that turn out to be true – reinvesting the comic drawing medium with an illustrative function (Figure 4-24). Now the “famous nose”, shown as part of a closed-eyed Duplessis profile head, is credited with exhaling a financial equivalent to lost, expended energy (at pre-nationalised prices). The Pif-Pif bird is illustrated as symbolizing Duplicity. The Pif Pif is a turn on Kif-Kif, Pif being slang for nose; the bird's head is Duplessis-shaped, and the nose has become a beak. The lower left hand corner shows a diagonally appended drawing, reminiscent of the language of trompe-l'oeil emblematic system drawings in eighteenth century British engravings.<sup>91</sup> Of course, the referent is the Ripley series itself,

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<sup>91</sup> These were known as medley prints. Mark Hallett discusses them in *The Spectacle of Difference. Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth* (New Haven & London, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art/Yale University Press, 1999): 37-56. “The mode of looking in the Whig Medley case both maintains the formal and ideological values of pictorial hierarchy and order – here understood in terms of the authoritative demand on our visual attention made by the dominant, underlying portrait engraving – and destabilizes those values, through the simultaneous bringing to sight of the peripheral, the grotesque and the vernacular - here represented by diverse figures and materials moving out of and across the pictorial margins towards the centre.” The medley print embodied a “liberty to ramble” for the early eighteenth-century gaze, and “that ramble was mapped out as a dialectical form of visual passage and performance, in which the eye's movement back and forth across competing areas of the picture-plane offered a localised

which excelled at presenting a systematic approach to graphic space diversification through recourse to a small but effective repertory of emblematic constructions. This addition presents the South American Tamanoir, an anteater with, “croyez-le ou non”, the longest nose in the world. This creature becomes Duplessian by association. Finally, introducing another of his pet textual intrusions, LaPalme gives a caption to his drawing of the “Normandie” ocean liner:

“Le Normandie” est deux fois cette longueur-là!  
 $1936+1939=3875-1944=1+9+3+1 = 14/$   
14 oppositionnistes/  
Coincidence des chiffres

This last line is linked to the others by a small arrow which itself casts a shadow. While it may be that the *Normandie* measured twice 1931, the importance in this number game lies with LaPalme’s love for numerology, that we might term “numeromancy”. The years chosen were the election years, two past, one coming; the adding of the resulting integers to the meaningful 14 members of the opposition, inscribed LaPalme’s Duplessis into a system of magical meanings springing out of a typographical cornucopia.

The *Imagier*, *Goldberg* and *Ripley’s* parodies, with their emblematic graphic organization, their dependence on ironies of word-play and graphic rendition of text, their constitution of diagrammatic order and their references to outside visual systems of information, encapsulated strategies that LaPalme would follow for the rest of his career.

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metaphor for, and instrument of, the workings of graphic satire as a whole.” The reader may also consult Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature. Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven and London, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art/Yale University Press, 1996): 12, for a brief discussion of the medley reprint, illustrated by figure 11, John Sturt’s *The May-Day Country Mirth*, 1706, etching and engraving, published by the engraver; collection of the Library of Congress, Washington.

These first sectioned Duplessis cartoons can effectively be seen as emblematic of the entire series to follow.

### **3. Robert LaPalme's 1944 caricatures and the purposes of graphic satire**

#### **3.1. National and sexual identity**

On February 19, 1944, *Le Canada* presented for the first time Robert LaPalme's conception of André Laurendeau as a Spanish Dancer in *El Bloco Populario* (Figure 4-25). "Senorita Passionata Lorendo" sashays in the foreground, clicking block castanets that sound out "bloc/bloc/bloc/bloc/..." Her skirt sways with her movement, and her open vest reveals her chest, hairy, with ribs showing. Her smiling face bears the small dashing moustache which, along with raccoon eyes and delicate lips, distinguished the real André Laurendeau's appearance. Behind the Senorita, Maxime Raymond kneels on one knee, and strums his guitar, singing perhaps a gypsy ode. In the background, turning away, reading a book, a cleric with white hair, hat and glasses calls to mind the person of abbé Lionel Groulx.

At *Le Devoir*, Omer Héroux was shocked. He demanded that *Le Canada* identify the cleric, and that it explain why he was being thus associated to a Spanish dancer. On March 10<sup>th</sup>, LaPalme answered with a caricature devised in celebration of the exhibition of Dutch art then being held at the Art Association of Montreal (Figure 4-26). Two figures peer at the first of a series of four portraits. Here we recognize the sad-faced Maxime Raymond, whose hat resembles the headgear often given by LaPalme to Bloc

personalities. His neighbour is a dashing Maurice Duplessis, like Raymond sporting a ruffled collar. He brandishes a sheet of paper adorned with a star, specifically a Star of David. Then follows the Spanish dancer, André Laurendeau, a coquette behind a fan, head covered in a shawl. Finally, last in line comes Lionel Groulx, instantly recognizable from the caricature made of him by LaPalme in 1934 (Figure 2-18). On a squat easel, LaPalme has addressed the reader directly: “En dépit de cette caricature ne ratez pas la belle exposition d’art hollandais à la Galerie des Arts.” The caricature subtitle voices the discussion between the two figures peering at the Raymond portrait: “Clair-obscur... mais plutôt clair qu’obscur.” *Le Devoir* was not mollified. “Est-ce un système?” asked Omer Héroux on March 13<sup>th</sup>:

Nous avons noté l’autre jour la caricature de curé – avec le coup de crayon du dessinateur anticlérical d’autrefois, en France, - qui avoisinait dans le *Canada* un homme politique déguisé en danseuse : nous avons demandé au *Canada* ce que cet ecclésiastique venait faire dans le paysage.

*Le Canada* ne nous a pas répondu, mais il revient à la charge ce matin avec une nouvelle caricature qui, au dessus de la légende Clair-obscur... mais plutôt clair qu’obscur, affiche quatre têtes dont la première est encore celle d’un curé.

Le cas paraît en effet plutôt clair qu’obscur; mais *Le Canada* aura-t-il cette fois le courage de dire qui il vise, qui il entend de la sorte tourner en ridicule et, s’il adopte là un système nouveau, un système que dédaignait jadis le Pays lui-même?

In March 1944, Omer Héroux, writing for the resolutely pro-Pétain *Le Devoir*, could believe that the anti-clerical caricature of Revolutionary and Third Republic France was a thing long gone. Even the progressive-liberal *Le Pays*, the notorious *rouge* newspaper founded by the freemason Godfroy Langlois in 1901, and which had been muzzled by

Wilfrid Laurier's Liberals in 1909, would not stoop this low.<sup>92</sup> Héroux's comment also acknowledged that an attack that could not be made verbally, was being made visually.

*Le Canada* duly answered on the next day:

Mais qui est-ce?

Les dessins de LaPalme intriguent M. Omer Héroux du *Devoir*. Il se demande pour la seconde fois qui est ce personnage que l'on voit se profiler derrière M. André Laurendeau ou figurer dans la galerie des maîtres de la pensée politique nationale-blocarde. Nous avons posé la question à La Palme et il nous a donné l'assurance qu'il ne s'agit pas de l'abbé Maheux. Dont acte. À présent, M. Héroux pourra dormir tranquille.

To which *Le Devoir* responded:

Nous avons prié le *Canada* de dire quel est l'ecclésiastique qu'il caricature et essaie par là de livrer à la risée publique [...] Le Canada s'imagine-t-il qu'il va s'en tirer avec cette dérobade? Puisqu'il accepte de publier les caricatures de La Palme, s'il ne les a point – ce qui est infiniment plus probable – lui-même commandées, qu'il ait donc au moins le courage d'en avouer l'objet! Qu'il dise nettement qui il vise!<sup>93</sup>

An important caveat has entered the discussion: LaPalme might only be the instrument of others' nefarious ideas. *Le Devoir*'s columnist *Le Grincheux* pursued the matter:

LaPalme, caricaturiste au Cacanada [sic], ne se trouve-t-il pas comme qui dirait à brûler maintenant ce qu'il adorait alors qu'il était membre actif et enthousiaste des Jeunesses Patriotes?<sup>94</sup> Dans le cas où ses caricatures d'aujourd'hui refléteraient ses opinions, il aurait quelque peu évolué. Il peut n'être toutefois que l'interprète des idées d'autrui, le fait s'est déjà vu en caricature. Pourquoi ne ferait-il alors pas connaître les collaborateurs éventuels qui inspirent ses coups de crayon? Le génie de l'inspiration est un génie comme un autre et mérite d'être connu.

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<sup>92</sup> See Patrice Dutil, *Devil's Advocate. Godfroy Langlois and the Politics of Liberal Progressivism in Laurier's Quebec* (Montreal, Robert Davies Publishing, 1994), especially pp 262-322, recounting the end of Langlois's tenure at *Le Canada* and the short-lived *Le Pays*.

<sup>93</sup> [Omer Héroux], "Dérobade". *Le Devoir*, March 13th 1944 : 4.

<sup>94</sup> In LaPalme (1997): 73, the artist confirmed his 1930s membership in the Association canadienne de la jeunesse catholique (ACJC).



The visual thus serves to dissemble the identity of authorship as much as it serves to 'reveal' a true identity through its play on exaggeration and resemblance. In this case, there seemed to be a hope that La Palme might not actually be the 'author' – the inventor – of his wicked cartoons. The notion was, oddly enough, echoed by the U.N. newspaper *Le Temps*.<sup>95</sup> Did both the Bloc and the UN harbour hopes that they might eventually bring LaPalme to their side?

The exhibition in question was "Masterpieces of Dutch Art", described by Arthur Lismer in the fall 1943 issue of *Canadian Art* as "a distinguished showing of early Dutch primitives and a modern group including fine examples of the work of Vincent van Gogh. The proceeds of the exhibition would be devoted to the relief fund for Dutch, English and other children in occupied Europe."<sup>96</sup> The two figures paying close attention are very likely Edmond Turcotte or Henri Girard, *Le Canada's* art critic, alongside the recognizably diminutive Robert LaPalme.

LaPalme's self-representation in his caricatures had begun in December 1943 with "Tu sais, mon vieux, chaque grève a son temps" of December 15 (Figure 4-27). Pipe puffing

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<sup>95</sup> In "LaPalme obligé d'accomplir leurs basses besognes", Union nationale newspaper *Le Temps's* anonymous writer excused LaPalme, who was clearly being forced to do these cartoons for money. *Le Temps* also declared its appreciation of caricature, especially by a French Canadian artist: "Il est l'auteur d'une série de portraits fort appréciés des connaisseurs. Cependant, nous regrettons qu'un journal politique, pour des fins mesquines force un artiste obligé à gagner sa vie à prostituer ses talents. Nous sommes certains que LaPalme répugne lui-même à cette besogne. Il sait être malin, mais jusqu'ici, il avait évité de tomber dans le grotesque." That the Liberal Party would employ a buffon actor, all well and good; but *Le Temps* likes LaPalme too much not to protest: "nous savons que ce n'est pas de sa faute et c'est pourquoi nous adressons cette protestation à ceux qui le forcent à accomplir leurs basses besognes." *Le Temps*, April 7th 1944.

<sup>96</sup> Arthur Lismer, "Montreal/The Art Association of Montreal." *Canadian Art*, Fall 1943: 73.

away under a hat, the head turned up towards a women's swimsuit advertisement, this figure has a portfolio under one arm; with both hands in pockets, the coat arcs forward. The grève is both the impending public services strike in Montréal (alarming in the middle of winter), and the beach where the nubile young woman disports herself. LaPalme had represented himself with the same coat in 1938. He reappeared on December 23<sup>rd</sup> in *Noël rue Sainte-Catherine dans l'Ouest* (Figure 4-28). On April 4, he pointedly commented on the diatribes of Omer Héroux in *Qui m'inspire?* (Figure 4-29). Addressing or answering us (presupposing our question to him) directly through both title and subtitle ("Mes muses... sacrifice!"), LaPalme leans over a blank drawing table. He tears out his hair with one hand and taps the table with the other, while the spectres of Raymond, Laurendeau and Duplessis hover over his shoulders. They are joined by the disembodied head of Groulx, adapted directly from LaPalme's 1934 caricature for *L'Ordre* (Figure 2-18). LaPalme mixes two phases of his graphic development, just as the old-fashioned desk, not truly designed to support his weight, is countered by the Marcel Breuer chair which he tips forward. It may be that LaPalme was also only too aware of the numerological pun he created by drawing four muses in an image appearing on the fourth page of the newspaper, on the fourth day of the fourth month of 1944.

The permissions accorded to LaPalme in these caricatures are remarkable. To essentially write down an oath ("...sacrifice!") is rare enough in official publications of the day. The use of coarse language and allusions was not yet remotely widespread, although the way had been opened by works such as Claude-Henri Grignon's intensely earthy and non-idealized depictions of Québec rural life and manners. As we have seen in Chapter 2,

Grignon and Olivar Asselin addressed these issues and the limits of presentable situations, in a *Bloyen* sense. LaPalme's cartoons may be, in the first instance, attacks on political figures; but they also appear to function as a vehicle for the release of registers of comment that cannot be addressed in text.

LaPalme increasingly made vivid allusions to sexual identity in his portrayals of Duplessis and Laurendeau. We have already seen Duplessis's nose ascribed a phallic character. LaPalme made this explicit on Valentine's Day 1944, as Duplessis looks into the handheld magic mirror and asked if he might once again hope to "fourrer mon nez dans les affaires de la province" ('fourrer' bearing a range of slang meanings, each one slightly less polite than the previous one: from "poke" or "stick in", to "fuck") (Figure 4-30).

LaPalme soon overemphasized the femininity of Laurendeau's physique, accentuating his slender build and lengthening his eyelashes; not to turn him into a woman, but into a homosexual, effeminate male. On April 19<sup>th</sup>, in *À l'ombre des jeunes bloqueux en fleur*, a swooning love-struck Laurendeau in a décolleté dress hovers in the foreground of an outdoor setting where, from behind a tree, an equally lovestruck Duplessis satyr spies his prey (Figure 4-31). The caption "Ah! Que c'est traître, le printemps!" refers to Duplessis's past betrayals of those who had helped found the Bloc and to the treacherous reality of springtime love. But the title also refers directly to Marcel Proust's *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*. In a celebrated passage, the narrator Marcel meditates on the capacity of a sonata to evoke, for the protagonist Swann, the memory of a lost love in a

springtime woodland.<sup>97</sup> Here, LaPalme's satire reaches to André Laurendeau's well-known love for music, particularly for that of Claude Debussy which was so identified with the novels of Proust. It's worth remembering that Debussy's *Après-midi d'un faune*, created for the ballet by the Russian dancer Nijinsky, had become a byword for androgyny and scandalous sensuality. Laurendeau, Duplessis, Debussy, Proust and the creatures of classical mythology were all improbably conflated here. The fusion of meanings revolves around a treachery measured by sexual union, one that comes with heady spring days, that can only lead to a (ridiculous) heartbreak. By placing the dancer and the satyr together, LaPalme opens a mythical register with notes of homosexual and bestial love.

LaPalme deployed Laurendeau in either as a homosexual man or as a cross-dressing Spanish Dancer throughout Spring and Summer 1944. He was often to be found linked to Lionel Groulx, whose titles *L'Appel de la race* and *Notre maître le passé* feature on books adorning these images. March 7<sup>th</sup>'s "Lorendo... à l'assaut de nos libertés » (Figure

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<sup>97</sup> "Ces paroles de Swann auraient pu fausser, pour plus tard, ma compréhension de la Sonate, la musique étant trop peu exclusive pour écarter absolument ce qu'on nous suggère d'y trouver. Mais je compris par d'autres propos de lui que ces feuillages nocturnes étaient tout simplement ceux sous l'épaisseur desquels, dans maint restaurant des environs de Paris, il avait entendu, bien des soirs, la petite phrase. Au lieu du sens profond qu'il lui avait si souvent demandé, ce qu'elle rapportait à Swann, c'était ces feuillages rangés, enroulés, peints autour d'elle (et qu'elle lui donnait le désir de revoir parce qu'elle lui semblait leur être intérieure comme une âme), c'était tout un printemps dont il n'avait pu jouir autrefois, n'ayant pas, fiévreux et chagrin comme il était alors, assez de bien-être pour cela, et que (comme on fait, pour un malade, des bonnes choses qu'il n'a pu manger), elle lui avait gardé. Les charmes que lui avaient fait éprouver certaines nuits dans le Bois et sur lesquels la Sonate de Vinteuil pouvait le renseigner, il n'aurait pu à leur sujet interroger Odette, qui pourtant l'accompagnait comme la petite phrase. Mais Odette était seulement à côté de lui, alors (non en lui comme le motif de Vinteuil) – ne voyant donc point -- Odette eût-elle été mille fois plus compréhensive -- ce qui, pour nul de nous (du moins j'ai cru longtemps que cette règle ne souffrait pas d'exceptions), ne peut s'extérioriser. "C'est au fond assez joli n'est-ce pas, dit Swann, que le son puisse refléter, comme l'eau, comme une glace."

<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext01/1lomb10.txt> Marcel Proust, *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*. Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, Fairbanks, AK.

4-32) finds Laurendeau swatting flies with a shovel, to which LaPalme pointedly gives the legend and arrow pointing toward “La Pelle de la race.” On June 22, Laurendeau trips over “Notre maître le passé”, his stumbling form configured as a swastika, *Le Bavoir* sticking out of his back pocket (Figure 4-33). In “Grande dissertation non politique exposant l’effet de la queue d’une morue sur les ondulations de la mer” Laurendeau wears ankle-length cuffed trousers, white socks and shoes. The “queue de morue” refers to his coat, narrowing at its extremity, but also to a long oval brush, like a make-up brush – an allusion to Laurendeau’s purported femininity (Figure 4-34).<sup>98</sup> On July 10<sup>th</sup>, the coquettish dancer, using a copy of *Notre maître le passé* as a fan, showing a well-shaped leg, waits at the corner of her Bloc while two well-dressed young men discuss her sexual hygiene: “Attention! Elle a un reliquat de bourrassisme!” This outdated clerical nationalism will surely infect anyone seduced by her suave new appearance (Figure 4-35). Above all, the Spanish dancer was LaPalme’s favourite Laurendeau. On May 8<sup>th</sup>, she graces a poster set in a cinema lobby for “Duplicité”, starring Andrea Lorendo and Maurici, after the work of the *Barbe national* Homard Heyrew (Figure 4-36). The puns cross-pollinate languages, spellings and meanings. Barbe is both “beard and “bard” – the bearded Omer Hérroux, school-marmish editor of *Le Devoir*. Hérroux could not have been happy at having his name so anglicized, nor at its transformation into “Homard”, “lobster”, a word that in French has further connotations: lazy, stupid, “soldier of the English guard” – because he is red-faced, embarrassed.<sup>99</sup> The bearded and bald Hérroux

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<sup>98</sup> Centre national de la recherche scientifique [France], *Trésor de la langue française informatisée* [TLFi]. <http://atilf.atilf.fr/dendien/scripts/tlfiv5/visusel.exe?27;s=1186574670;r=2;nat=;sol=1> , accessed June 4th 2006.

<sup>99</sup> [TLFi]. <http://atilf.atilf.fr/dendien/scripts/tlfiv5/advanced.exe?8;s=1186574670> , accessed June 4th, 2006.

appeared to serenade the Dancer in *Ingratitude/ Ce volage d'Omer!* on July 13 (Figure 4-37). In the window, Laurendeau listens demurely while down the street, the disappointed Duplessis (given female breasts visible in a plunging neckline, at a window beside a padlocked door) gazes past his own large, flaccid and drooping nose at the spot where Hérroux has just picked up the money dropped for his singing. "O divine Laure andouille," Hérroux croons, all the while cranking the handle on his *Le Bavoir* melody box. Laurendeau's name is broken into two, Laure a simple enough woman's name, andouille another variable slang synonym for "stupid person", "stuffed sausage". Here the sexual "stuffed" also meets with a connotation of the porcine, allusive of stupidity but also of the debasing vocabulary of Léon Bloy. Omer is a *volage*, one who does not fix his tastes or preferences upon a single person for long. Inconstant, ungrateful, Omer has moved on in his seduction from Duplessis to Laurendeau.

Laurendeau's interplay with Duplessis became amorous and deadly in *Barble-Bleue* (May 9, Figure 4-38). The wife-murderer beckons Laurendeau to an open closet (with its open padlock, of course) wherein are the hanging be-gowned bodies of Paul Gouin and Philippe Hamel. Laurendeau's dress is patterned with a three-dimensional bloc motif that reappears in the last of this series, a spoof of the ballet *La fille mal gardée* (August 19, Figure 4-39). Laurendeau leaves the sleeping mother Maxime Raymond, *Le Bavoir* open at his lap, as the amorous Duplessis awaits.

The Spanish dancer and the homosexual male intertwined to connote a ridiculed Laurendeau, most often through references to opera and ballet. Measures of ethnic

belonging and masculinities were also deployed from time to time on the archetypal Québec identity figure, Baptiste. This polymorphous symbol appeared in several guises: as a muscular, bald, well-proportioned lumberjack in *Baptiste 44* on July 11<sup>th</sup> (Figure 4-40) and as a laughing boxer, unable to take seriously the scrawny Laurendeau who is standing on an open block containing a copy of *Notre maître le passé* (July 19, Figure 4-41). The boxer wears trunks adorned with the words “Baptiste Libéral”, an unsubtle and prescriptive identification that may have inadvertently rankled with *Le Canada*’s readers, for it undid the ironic aura which prevailed throughout this campaign. It’s worth noting the emphasis placed in this drawing on Baptiste’s vertebral column. In these 1943-44 caricatures, LaPalme increasingly took the trouble to emphasize the body as a revealed, secret and personal entity, as if this would undermine the reader’s sense of beholding a simple abstraction.

In contrast to this youthful Baptiste, the traditional habitant type of Baptiste, given a permanent place in the daily newspaper-fed imaginary of Québec by LaPalme’s fellow caricaturist Albéric Bourgeois, made two appearances in the winter of 1943-44. On March 20<sup>th</sup> he stands in his great-coat, holding a dead chicken under his arm – as if he’d walked out of a Bourgeois panel at *La Presse* (where he might normally be about to hand the carcass over to his wife Catherine). Baptiste reads a notice: “Avez-vous fait tout votre possible pour hâter la victoire?” (Figure 4-42). The sign is a trap: the Spanish dancer looms behind him, knife ready to be plunged into Baptiste’s back. She casts Duplessis’s shadow, her extended knife taking on the form of his nose. LaPalme had used the shadow that reveals treachery in connection with the war effort before, on December 14 1943, as

a plump bourgeois woman refusing to let rooms to a mother with two small children is shown to cast the shadow of a pig (Figure 4-43). The housing shortage and the fate of young families with the father away at war was an issue of great concern in Montreal at the time. Similarly, on December 20<sup>th</sup>, a stylized Anglophone woman appears to have called for the Army to come and deal with the threatened municipal services strike. As a cutout shape from an English newspaper, she casts a swastika shadow (Figure 4-44), much as Laurendeau would be made to do six months later. Baptiste returned in Bourgeois's garb for an image published on May 15<sup>th</sup> 1944. It described the ridiculous electoral choices faced by the citizens of Québec: "votez pour Dédé Lorendo", reads a poster graced with the male face of Laurendeau once again swishing a fan. The poster covers two earlier ones, for Duplessis and Camilien Houde. Guffawing, Baptiste exclaims 'Ah! Sacré nous aut'es!' (Figure 4-45).

### **3.2. Identity, anxiety, text and visuality: emerging shifts in LaPalme's language of caricature and graphic satire**

The intertwining of LaPalme's own repertoire of representations with those fashioned by other artists would now recur incessantly. Alongside the plundering of such forms as ballet, theatre and film, LaPalme joyfully sent up his own work, as we have seen through his quotations of the Lionel Groulx figure and his references to the wider régime of caricatural, comic and illustrational imagery. His use of text had long since quit the simple realm of title and subtitle. LaPalme annotates, explains, intervenes, points out and comments, or has secondary witnesses do so within the caricatural space. He and they



stand in for us, the readers, by their speech and by their represented attitudes. They are not yet made to look out and address us directly, although many inscriptions acknowledge our presence (as, for example, when LaPalme indicated “Mes muses...”).

LaPalme’s increasingly complex layerings of text were unveiled in the first of the Rebus caricatures that would become one of his favourite ploys throughout the remainder of his career. The caricature is titled simply *Rébus*, and is subtitled “... et rebut!” (Figure 4-46). (“Rebus, and rubbish” is the closest approximation in terms of the homophonic play of sound; the original’s equivalence also depends on two different silent consonants). The diagrammatic image is both a mystery and none whatsoever, since LaPalme sets up each coded image-clue and then intervenes with secondary scripts to explain the resulting riddles. Just as the title *Rébus* self-evidently and unnecessarily identifies the whole image (but not entirely unnecessarily, since it is itself necessary to the subtitle’s pun), so the overly obvious explanations slide between the truly obvious and that which is obvious only through the ironic stretch. The word “Maux” (aches) gives us Duplessis’ head with the workingman’s hat LaPalme had used in many images of Bloc supporters or leaders. “Rice” comes from the laughing figure that is superimposed by the giant letters CE – a meaningless correspondence which signifies that the riddle-setter could not cough up the visual conundrum for this syllable. “Dupe” is a dim-looking, bespectacled elector reading a U.N. poster, written in the first person (“votez pour mes promesses” – thus the riddle’s answer is speaking to the elector). On the second register, the elderly and also dim-looking reader of *Le Bavoire* is made to signify a “plaie”, blot or open sore; and finally “scie” derives easily from the saw shown bisecting the immense nose of the answer “le

tout”, the nose of Duplessis – whose caricatural likeness will in any case be more familiar to *Le Canada*’s readers than all the elements combined, however ironically. This exercise in the humorous tautologies of meaning corresponds to a satirical attitude towards the informative functions of almost any text in the public realm. Newspaper reports, political speeches, simple nouns and markers of culture are combined and recombined at will. Meanings can break down and be amplified when textual and visual information is placed together and made to interact.

More importantly, ironic contrasts of emphasis and intention act on the recipient, reader and visual witness, who are made into complicit fellow-builders of the graphic satire’s meaning. This complicity was crucial for the purposes of caricature in a party-political newspaper. It was obliged to gingerly play on the expectations of a shared political affiliation, all the while maintaining a reputation for the objective and reliable presentation of factual reporting. When these purposes became confused, LaPalme’s strengths as a visual and textual satirist – his sense of humour – could be curtailed.

As the election day of August 8<sup>th</sup> 1944 drew closer, the daily political caricatures grew more direct in their attack. On August 7, LaPalme delivered another innovation that he would repeatedly return to in connection with Duplessis. This was the numerological caricature, in which dates or numbers chosen by or associated to Duplessis the man, the politician, could be divided into their integers and recombined to make magic meanings (Figure 4-47). The energy of LaPalme’s boisterous attack was clearly associated to the final burst of campaigning and morale-boosting for the Liberal party. He coins a fine

visual pun with the mark of a footprint that will boot Duplessis and Laurendeau out of the way on Election Day – the footprint shape echoing that of the date itself, the Indo-Arabic numeral “8.”

It is likely that the Liberals and *Le Canada* could scent imminent defeat, for the ferocity of these late cartoons was matched by their occasional lack of humour, lending the resulting cartoons a hectoring and self-convincing tone. On August 4, LaPalme’s drawing of Duplessis in full oratorical flight is placed atop an uncharacteristically long “quoted speech”, a hyperbolic parody of Duplessis’s speaking style (Figure 4-48). This text attributes a narcissistic and uncritical self-regard to the Chef, based on similar characteristics in his true oratorical style. He is purported to claim electors’ allegiance through a litany of doubtful achievements whose transparent inadequacy he cannot recognize. The text depends on an infinite degree of modification to convince the reader that the parody is, in effect, true to life: that Duplessis is self-parodic in his stump speeches. Common cause is made with the reader once again. But this time, the parody rests in the text alone. Duplessis’s body is given a degree of hypermetric (and hypometric) exaggeration, the rhetorical hands and their gestures supplanting the nose, which accordingly shrinks to a beak-like, jutting protuberance. Playful corporeal manipulation has given way to a sense of threat that is *invested in* the figure, rather than *effected on* it.

With this diversity of treatment in LaPalme’s manipulation of the body, it might be useful to recall the delineation of the vertebral column in the exposed back of the Baptiste

Liberal and the ribs of the first Laurendeau-dancer figure. This delineation was a discrete element in the system of referents assembled by LaPalme to connote the observed human body as a source for his caricature. This seems like a key to the departure from the very tight and compact systems of form (body, likeness and setting) that LaPalme had used throughout his work at *L'Action catholique* and in the first months at *Le Canada*. This new fluidity became especially evident in the representations of Duplessis in 1944. In two caricatures *La politique en ligne droite?* (March 8<sup>th</sup> 1944) (Figure 4-49), and *L'hydromètre national* (March 15<sup>th</sup>) (Figure 4-50), LaPalme allowed his undular, swashbuckling line to find a renewed freedom in the very folds of Duplessis's facial skin. These creases are themselves bouquets of brushed-ink strokes forming abstract patterns, rather like an alphabet of physically-charged connotations and notations, which can be redeployed for aesthetic sympathy through the folds and outlines of Duplessis's suit. LaPalme is reaching back towards his virtuoso performances of the celebrity caricatures. The line is frequently made to unfurl in unbroken continuities that define space and differences between form and void that are suddenly inversed or shifted as the line progresses. *L'hydromètre national* and the Valentine's Day caricature seen earlier are cases in point.

This very virtuosity presents the artist as an inventor capable of rendering observed reality through a graphic transformation. The relationships of likeness (of face, body, clothing) are re-presented through expertly chosen relationships of scale and distance between elements, and through expertly emphasized differences in line which in turn allow the necessary illusions of rendition to be made present to the reader's intelligence.

Paradoxically, the allusion to form has to work both through an abstracting process and through a confirmation to the reader that observed reality is at the source. This is where the emphasis on ribs, vertebrae and folds of skin takes its importance. It's the weight of the physiology beneath the skin, and the resulting perception we have of the body in its youth or in its aging, that supports our psychological reading of the figure: as vulnerable, real, at risk.

Two bath caricatures show this most clearly, first of all because they are fictive situations that require the subject to be undressed. *Quand le bain est tiré, il faut le boire* of April 18<sup>th</sup> 1944 presents Duplessis in the bath, scrubbing his back, exposing the side of his upper body and carefully stressing the overlap of a paunch stomach upwards over the fold with the thorax (Figure 4-51). Scribbles indicate swarthinness: chest and abdomen hair, hair on the upper and lower arms. Duplessis is rueing his incapacity to overcome the nationalisation of hydro-electric power, and he a "trifluvien." In *Bloc-Note*, on May 31<sup>st</sup>, André Laurendeau is seen from behind in the shower (Figure 4-52). *Le Bavoir* toilet-paper hangs in detachable sheets on the wall. Laurendeau mincingly complains, "J'suis comme Hitler... je perds ma ligne." He is surely vain, and vainglorious, comparing himself frivolously to Hitler "losing his line" – the limits of his territorial control. For the capricious Laurendeau, to "lose one's line" is to put on weight. And yet he is scrawny : we sense the hips protruding as he balances sideways to reach up one arm and scrub beneath; in stretching, his vertebrae protrude all the way down his back, and the cheeks of his posterior hang low, feminine but above muscular upper legs. Through ridicule, more is being revealed to us than we necessarily wish to see, or wish to admit to wishing

to see. The common field invested by LaPalme and the reader now recurrently includes an understanding that the intimate body is available, as a foil in the building up of satiric insight.

Effectively, if the realm of public speech was prone to hyperbole, and the press was both a participant in and a critic of this process, then it was important to draw a line around the limits of both hyperbole and factual reporting. In graphic satire, these limits could be honoured in the breach. As a visual/textual hybrid, caricature, when it was allied to the purposes of graphic satire, released some of the underlying cultural anxieties which could find no other form of expression but which might underlay the evolving political and social choices made in Québec society. The sexual and often latently violent or violating content of LaPalme's caricatures introduced this content tacitly but manifestly into the world opened up by *Le Canada* for its readers.

### **3.3. Robert LaPalme's spoils of war**

The Liberal administration at Québec City lost the election of August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1944, and Maurice Duplessis thereby won the first of four straight election victories. His ensuing fifteen-year reign was stopped only by his death in September 1959. The war in Europe and Japan continued into 1945, until VE day on May 8<sup>th</sup> and VJ day (celebrated twice, with the actual surrender of Japan on August 15<sup>th</sup> and its ceremonial surrender on September 2<sup>nd</sup>). The much-hated conscription came into force only in late 1944. The

consequences of the peace and the ensuing Cold War form a backdrop to the next chapter. Thanks to Duplessis's recapture of power, the war on the home front did not end in Québec. What was Robert LaPalme's position as Québec politics and culture settled into the long conflict? While Duplessis perfected the Union nationale's stranglehold on power, how was the cultural and mass-broadcasting milieu poised to articulate the transformations that belied Duplessis's representations of his people's identity?

The Union nationale, and Québec society as a whole, certainly reaped the benefits of the prosperity which the wartime and postwar economy brought to Western countries. In the 1943-45 period, Robert LaPalme was rewarded for his association with the Liberal establishment that administered governments at Québec City and at Ottawa in wartime. In the milieus of Québec's book industry and theatre, in Canadian diplomacy and broadcasting, in exhibitions and the newly founded artistic infrastructure of wartime and postwar Canada, LaPalme claimed a place right from the moment of the *Première exposition des Indépendants*. The Québec City milieu of which he had been a part from 1937 through 1943 held in nucleus almost all his contacts for the next decade.

After the Galerie municipale and the network of Canadian and US exhibitions, LaPalme turned to publishing as the next outlet for his work. It was a return, since he had come to public attention through Albert Lévesque's Librairie d'Action française in the early 1930s. As the war drew to a close, LaPalme gained visibility at Éditions Lucien Parizeau. In 1943 Parizeau, former colleague of LaPalme's at *L'Ordre* and associate of publisher Bernard Valiquette (whose own house was founded in the ashes of Albert Lévesque's),

was rewarded for his services as publicist for the Godbout team in the 1939 election with sufficient funds to establish Éditions Lucien Parizeau. He soon joined in the commercial boom for publishing attendant on Québec's role in the international francophone book industry, which prevailed until the aftermath of the liberation of France in the summer of 1944. LaPalme was one of Parizeau's choice illustrators, along with Alfred Pellan and Jacques de Tonnancour. At *Le Canada*, Turcotte and his staff took special pride in championing books and the book arts. The newspaper devoted a full page to books daily, opposite the editorial page.<sup>100</sup>

In August 1944, the *Nouveau Monde Illustré* carried a feature article on LaPalme. It announced the forthcoming publication at Parizeau of *There's no secret Weapon*, a book that would regroup the series of paintings LaPalme had originally executed for the barracks at Valcartier, and subsequently exhibited at the Bonestelle Gallery in New York.

Aujourd'hui ses caricatures politiques sont de véritables pamphlets, elles sont marquées au coin du meilleur humour, mais l'invention reste typiquement française... [ses autres œuvres] sont d'une telle splendeur qu'on se dit aussitôt que Robert La Palme n'est pas seulement le meilleur caricaturiste du Canada, mais

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<sup>100</sup> On October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1945 *Le Canada* published a special literary supplement, with graphic contributions by Alfred Pellan and Robert LaPalme, to celebrate the thriving French language publishing milieu and to lend it support. "Il suffit de connaître même très superficiellement tout le chemin parcouru par l'édition canadienne depuis 1940 pour savoir que toute entreprise qui tendrait à diminuer le rendement de l'édition au Canada français équivaudrait au sabotage organisé de la survivance de l'esprit français au Canada. Depuis le temps où Olivar Asselin occupait le fauteuil éditorial ici, l'intérêt des rédacteurs du Canada pour la littérature ne s'est jamais démenti. Au début c'était à la page de rédaction qu'on trouvait les analyses, comptes rendus et critiques qui tenaient le lecteur au courant des mouvements d'idées et d'art dans le monde et au Canada. Après l'occupation de la France, on a jugé essentiel d'avoir une page hebdomadaire entièrement consacrée aux publications, éditions et rééditions de livres français qui pouvaient se faire au Canada. [...] L'influence de la page littéraire du *Canada* vient de ce qu'elle est la seule tribune où la critique d'idées peut s'exprimer librement, sans préjugés d'aucune sorte." The France Amérique news agency in New York regularly used their articles, the Canadian embassy in Paris followed up on their recommendations; the present supplement was a synthesis of efforts "accompli par notre équipe littéraire... C'est notre orgueil d'avoir réussi à donner le ton que nous voulions à cette manifestation spirituelle avec des moyens aussi limités que ceux du journalisme canadien de l'immédiat après-guerre."



encore qu'il est l'artiste le plus achevé, le plus évolué de la province de Québec.<sup>101</sup>

In 1945, LaPalme created the cover for Jean-Louis Gagnon's *Vent du Large*. In a series of written sketches, Gagnon described his war time experiences. Gagnon and LaPalme had been professionally reunited on the staff of *Le Canada* in the spring of 1944, when Gagnon was brought in just before the Godbout administration nationalized the Montreal Light Heat and Power company, forming the first Hydro-Québec with newly appointed senator T.-D. Bouchard at the helm.

Gagnon had certainly traveled far from *L'Ordre*, *Vivre* and *La Nation*. At *L'Événement-Journal* and broadcasting at Québec City, he organized the first meetings of the Canadian-Soviet friendship association in the summer of 1941 and campaigned at the side of Adélard Godbout for conscription in the 1942 plebiscite. He was inducted into the British secret service and posted to the pro-France Libre radio station in Ghana. He returned to Québec City and later returned, heading the France Libre news service operating out of New York City before assuming command of its Montreal bureau. He inherited the flagship Radio-Canada programme *La Situation, ce soir*. He also became a correspondent for the Canadian edition of *Time Magazine*, where he helped bring LaPalme's work to national attention. When he went to Brazil as a public relations officer for the Canadian-based Brazilian Heat and Light (later Brascan) on the invitation of ambassador Jean Déry in 1946, he was part of a wider effort to give meaningful positions to important Québec figures in the post war international projects of Canada. Déry was

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<sup>101</sup> "Robert LaPalme", in *Le Nouveau monde illustré* (August 1944), collated in Robert LaPalme press clippings scrapbook.

also responsible for exhibitions by Alfred Pellan and Robert LaPalme in Sao Polo in 1946 and 1947. The association of LaPalme and other artists to the Canadian government domestic and international structure was clearly a determining factor in their careers. This was especially true for those who, like Gagnon and LaPalme, were above all journalists, for the wartime infrastructure of publishing, censorship and information transformed the broadcasting world. The cultural and political missions shared by the individuals and institutions involved also acted day by day on the transformation of Québec involvement and use of all the arts. LaPalme, closely involved in one of the key episodes for the development and public promotion of visual art through his participation in the Galerie municipale de Québec and the *Première exposition des Indépendants*, the *War Cartoons and Caricatures of the British Commonwealth* exhibition and through his work for *Le Canada*, would continue to work in public art forms through his political caricature and through his increasing work in mural designs and painting, in book illustration and in theatre poster design, throughout the remainder of the 1940s. He positioned himself as the visual style-setter par excellence of this era. He would effectively represent two voices: that of the Canadian federal establishment and that of the increasingly energetic French-Canadian cultural milieu of Montreal.

With this in mind, the growing ribaldry of LaPalme's daily caricatures should be considered for its political implications. The expressive silhouette style of LaPalme's mural designs was also creeping into his daily drawings, as we see in the shadow projection of Duplessis offstage that speaks "Je les ai tenues mes promesses!" (Figure 4-53). Duplessis's cast shadow shows his elbows articulated as narrow joins of Popeye-type

arms. "T'aurais dû les lâcher, pour qu'on les voye!" answers a heckler from the audience. (You should have let your balls go so we could see them? But perhaps they aren't there...) The heckler has two companions, one of whom laughs along with him eyes closed; while the other looks out at us, in a rare direct complicit address to the reader. We find ourselves in the position of the offstage Duplessis.

The stage would be directly compelling for LaPalme at this time, for he was responsible for some of the sexually riskier visual content of Gratien Gélinas's hugely popular *Fridolinons 1945*. As we will see, this content was allied to a spoof of English and French Canadian interpretations of Canadian history. The sexual and the political had found one another and emerged into public discussion through LaPalme's distinct visual punning. LaPalme thus had free enough rein in two arenas of Québec entertainment: the variety theatre and the daily newspaper cartoon, where gesture, speech and visual representation brought densely related, sometimes overlapping meanings into play. His graphic systems, developed in parallel for different public purposes, were now beginning to fuse as the spaces of caricature and theatre themselves fused through representation of each in the other's realm. Within this fusion LaPalme added the manifold practices of graphic information that blended the factual and the inventive in the enveloping realm of public images. Expression was given to a layered knowledge of the world that was at once spoken and heard, performed and privately known, through a carnivalesque interpretation with recourse to the sexual, the base and the physical as well as the intellectual, the arcane and the superstitious. The authority vested in the governing of society was inverted through recourse to the profuse visual and textual imaginings through which men and women defined their roles in a conflicted, fast changing social

environment. This procedure awaited LaPalme with renewed purpose after August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1944, as he became a caricaturist in opposition. He was no less affiliated to party but, in a manner that was perhaps more liberating than he imagined, free from association with the exercise of administrative power in Québec itself. This definitively realigned his critical position.

It was a long, tough and clamorous opposition, both to Maurice Duplessis and to the construction of society which he embodied. LaPalme's work continued to speak this opposition along the different visual and semantic registers of caricature that we have seen him develop in 1943 and 1944. Blossoming at war's end into parallel artistic arenas out of necessity and curiosity, LaPalme espoused the engagement exemplified by Père Marie-Alain Couturier and by his own championing in 1941 of the Dominican father's cause. Whether intended or not, the now less trammelled circumstances of his graphic satire gave LaPalme the position of freedom as Couturier conceived of it for the artists of France who, from Daumier to Rousseau and passing through Cézanne, had been "anarchistes, réfractaires." It was their rights and their liberty of thought which had been the core value that France defended at its very borders against the Nazi onslaught in May 1940.<sup>102</sup> LaPalme did not invest himself in the renewal of sacred art. But he did resolutely focus on the public visual arts of mural painting and newspaper caricature; he allied himself to clear social critique, to the social cause which Père Couturier had said could, like the religious, "surélever l'art lui-même".

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<sup>102</sup> Marie-Alain Couturier, *La Vérité blessée*. Paris, Plon, 1982 : 20.

#### 4. From *Le Canada* to the wider Canadian field and back again, 1944-1951

We have seen that just before the August 1944 election, which had elicited some of LaPalme's most venomous caricatures to date, the *Nouveau Monde Illustré* had run a feature article on the increasingly controversial caricaturist. His motives were being openly questioned by the Union nationale paper *Le Temps* and its fellow-travellers *Le Devoir* and *Le Bloc*. In a spirit perhaps gentler because removed from the fray of party politics, the *Nouveau Monde Illustré* article was illustrated with portrait caricatures rather more reminiscent of LaPalme's emblematic celebrity caricatures of the late 1930s. André Laurendeau and Maurice Duplessis appeared in a guise somewhat more neutral, and certainly more polite, than was the case in LaPalme's 1943-44 election cartoons for *Le Canada*. Laurendeau was still slender-faced, with distinct, lipstick-adorned lips. The tired racoon eyes for which he was famous were now more prominent. He was no longer a Spanish dancer; his lapel was adorned with a fleur-de-lys flag motif, used by *Le Temps* and other Pétain-supporting organizations in Québec (Figure 4-54). With some transformations, this motif became the basis of Québec's 'national' flag in 1948. Maurice Duplessis was shown as almost genial, smiling as he held his *lunettes* – a rare unpolemic portrayal for LaPalme (Figure 4-55). Although published in the month of the 1944 election, Duplessis was still presented as the *former* Prime Minister while Adélard Godbout, in farmer's overalls and boots, holding a pitchfork, stands before a wayside cross as the current Premier (Figure 4-56). LaPalme was hailed as "le plus français des artistes canadiens et le plus intelligent des caricaturistes québécois." The article was a brief career overview, stretching from the 4-year old LaPalme's first "abstract" horse to the imminent publication of "There's no Secret Weapon" at éditions Lucien Parizeau.

This project, at once intended for exhibition and publication, was altogether emblematic of LaPalme's, and his well-placed friends', efforts to make him more widely known in Québec and across Canada.

#### **4.1. "There's no secret weapon" – exhibition and book activities beyond caricature**

As a book, "There's no Secret Weapon" would have introduced new colour work by LaPalme to a wider public, by reprinting the designs for the ironic and comic murals on the history of warfare which LaPalme composed in 1942 for the Valcartier training facility officer's mess, at the request of Commanding Officer Lt-Colonel Adolph Dansereau. Meant to deflate Canadian troops' apprehensions about a German secret weapon, the mural project was cancelled by the succeeding Officer-in-Command, General Georges Vanier. Undeterred, LaPalme got great mileage out of these paintings through a series of exhibitions throughout the 1940s and through the publicity afforded by articles in publications such as *La Revue Moderne*. In the spring of 1945, Robert Ayre covered the story for *Canadian Art* magazine.<sup>103</sup> The article was the first of a series that helped bring LaPalme to national attention throughout the 1940s and early 1950s. Ayre's title, "Bravo! Lapalme", quotes an approving commentary by Charles Hamel in Jean-Charles Harvey's radical-liberal *Le Jour*:

Bravo, LaPalme! Il faut que les Canadiens français jeunes et hardis comme lui nous fassent connaître en Amérique sous notre vrai jour et prouvent aux autres habitants que le Canada français n'est pas uniquement le refuge de traditions

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<sup>103</sup> See Robert Ayre, "Bravo! La Palme", in *Canadian Art* vol 2: 4 (Spring 1945): 150-154. Robert LaPalme also recounts the story; see LaPalme 1997: 110.

mangées de mites et de tout un fatras démodé. Il faut que l'on sache que l'art connaît maintenant ici une vie intense et que les canadiens français sont prêts à marcher au premier rang des initiatives artistiques les plus hardies. Il faut qu'on sache, enfin, que la pensée n'a pas été atrophiée chez nous - et que nous avons su rester irrévérencieux et ironiques, bien frondeurs, bien français!"

The Parizeau edition, in the event, was never published, owing to Parizeau's bankruptcy.

But between 1944 and 1946 LaPalme was nonetheless very active as an illustrator and designer for Lucien Parizeau. A former colleague of LaPalme's at *Olivar Asselin's L'Ordre* in 1933-1934, and a keen defender of the values of Third Republic France, Parizeau had been a key participant in the publicity campaign which helped Adélard Godbout to power in 1939. He worked from 1939 to 1943 in the public relations arm of Canada's National War Finances Committee, ensuring liaison with French-language newspapers. *Éditions Lucien Parizeau* was founded in autumn 1943 with direct financial assistance from leading Liberal Party officials.<sup>104</sup> It represented a vital link between the exiled French Gaullist intellectual community in New York and that of Québec, devoting some two thirds of its publications to classical or contemporary exiled French authors. The remaining third was given to Québec publications. Throughout the list, the quality of printing and the care taken over illustrated content placed Lucien Parizeau as a key promoter of Québec contemporary art of the mid-1940s. He presented Alain Grandbois's poems *Îles de la nuit* (1944), illustrated by Alfred Pellán, and Réal Benoît's book of tales, *Nézon* (1945), illustrated by Jacques de Tonnancour. Léon Mercier-Gouin, J. Lébédoff and Charles Macdonald were also featured illustrators. At *Au diable vert*, the ground

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<sup>104</sup> See Jacques Michon, ed., *Histoire de l'édition littéraire au Québec au Xxe siècle. Vol 2 : Le temps des éditeurs 1940-1959* (Montréal : Fides, 2004) : 65-68, and Silvie Bernier, « Un résistant canadien : Lucien Parizeau », in Jacques Michon, ed. *Éditeurs transatlantiques* (Sherbrooke : Ex Libris and Montréal : Triptyque, 1991) : 48.

floor art gallery of his offices at 2027 Peel Street, Parizeau exhibited works by Pellan, de Tonnancour and Paul-Émile Borduas. In 1946, Parizeau planned to publish a deluxe edition of *Songes* by the pseudonymous Vercors (Jean Bruller, active in the French Resistance, founder of Éditions de Minuit and clandestine author of *Le Silence de la mer*) illustrated by Léon Masson (also the illustrator of Charles Baudelaire's *Un Mangeur d'Opium*, published in Paris in 1945 at Éditions Mandragore).<sup>105</sup> The Vercors project, like many others, fell by the wayside with Parizeau's bankruptcy later in the year.<sup>106</sup> LaPalme was by far his most active illustrator, with illustrations gracing 12 of the 43 volumes released by Parizeau, including covers for the *Spleen de Paris* by Charles Baudelaire, for Jean-Louis Gagnon's wartime memoir *Vent du large* and for Frances Gunther's *La révolution de l'Inde*, a translation of the American journalist's plea for post-war independence for India. The resilient critique of British imperialism found accord with the intellectual climate of confident, post-war Québec.

The *esprit français* that critics of this period celebrated at every legitimate encounter is perhaps best exemplified in René Garneau's appraisal of Parizeau's edition of Baudelaire's *Spleen de Paris*. Garneau hailed the appearance of this title in Parizeau's new La Corbeille series of deluxe imprints, as an important post-war departure that renewed contacts with essential aspects of French literature. Garneau was in no doubt that La Corbeille announced a new era in Québec publishing.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> The complete listing of publications by Lucien Parizeau will be found in Manon Poulin, "Catalogue des Éditions Parizeau" in Silvie Bernier, *op. cit.* : 77-79.

<sup>106</sup> However, the proofs for this publication project are now in the collection of the Galerie d'art de l'Université Sherbrooke. See Jacques Michon (2004) : 67, note 10.



*Le Spleen de Paris* que Parizeau vient de faire paraître est l'un des premiers numéros de la collection La Corbeille dans laquelle on nous donnera un Aloysius Bertrand, un Stendhal, le Zadig [by Voltaire, originally published in 1747] et plusieurs autres textes classiques introuvables depuis 1940. [...] Imprimée en caractères coquins sur beau papier, et portant au plat supérieur de sa couverture un dessin en couleurs du maître illustrateur qu'est le caricaturiste Robert LaPalme, dessin différent pour chaque numéro de la série, La Corbeille est le chef-d'œuvre de l'édition canadienne [et] pour la première fois dans l'histoire de la réédition des œuvres françaises au Canada, on a vraiment l'impression qu'il s'agit d'une publication originale [...].

And LaPalme had found the deep spirit of Baudelaire :

Le vieux rêve baudelairien, qu'il emprunte la voix cruelle de l'ironie ou la tendresse du pur poème, reste le même. Il n'a jamais lâché Baudelaire. On le retrouve dans ces affreux portraits qui restent de lui et jusque dans l'évocation si intelligente de La Palme sur la couverture de l'édition Parizeau.<sup>108</sup>

This concordance of cruelty, irony and tenderness would gradually come to mark LaPalme's caricature, especially in the later 1950s. And if the spirit of Baudelaire haunts the historiography of caricature because of his writings on the comic, the tenor of his poems and prose may also reward a careful listening in assessing the informing spirit of LaPalme's graphic satire.

In late 1945, Québec francophone publishing had reason to feel expansive. The activity which had been fuelled by the wartime requirements to keep French culture alive, making Québec the premier exporter of French books throughout the world, looked set to continue. In France, a tremendous quarrel was brewing as French publishers largely

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<sup>107</sup> Jacques Michon, *op. cit.* : 68, cites René Garneau from a separate article in the literary supplement published one week later ("Servitude et grandeur littéraires", *Le Canada*, 22 octobre 1945, suppl p. 1).

sought to reclaim a territory which many felt Québec no longer had the right to usurp. The occasional collaborationist activities undertaken by some Québec publishers were held against the milieu as a whole, despite its overwhelmingly Republican and Gaullist sympathies, by French firms seeking to bolster a communist resistance world view in the immediate aftermath of liberation. But on October 22, 1945, *Le Canada*, which had done as much as any newspaper to provide coverage of French literature and intellectual life, ran a special supplement on the subject. A caricature by LaPalme summed up the immense changes. In *1935 et 1945* (Figure 4-57), the state of publishing across a ten years' span is presented. Once, an order from Chicoutimi for three more of Jovette Bernier's *La Chair décevante* [illustrated by LaPalme, as we saw in Chapter Two] had elicited the packing-boy's astonished response: "Encore!" Now, a telephone-chained, cigar-smoking publisher must fend off many calls while a stoic André Gide waits for attention. The publisher deals with orders for ten thousand "Maritains" and twenty thousand "Spleens" and sorts out orders from Buenos Aires, Cairo and Saigon.

For LaPalme, it was all part of a world in which he crossed frontiers easily, using one arena to promote his activities in another. When he carried out a complete set of illustrations for the landmark children's book *Ristontac* by Andrée Maillet, published by Parizeau just in time for Christmas 1945,<sup>109</sup> one of the key colour illustrations from this

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<sup>108</sup> René Garneau, "À la source du pessimisme. 'Le spleen de Paris' de Charles Baudelaire." *Le Canada*, October 15 1945 p. 5.

<sup>109</sup> « [...] *Ristontac* d'Andrée Maillet, abondamment illustré de gouaches en couleurs de Robert La Palme, est d'un genre nouveau pour la maison. Il s'agit d'un conte pour la jeunesse qui relate l'histoire d'un enfant amérindien. L'originalité de l'ouvrage tient surtout à ses illustrations en couleurs très stylisées, qui envahissent la page et le texte. Le format inhabituel du volume (34,2 x 24,9 cm) le rapproche des grands albums illustrés. » Silvie Bernier, « Un résistant canadien : l'éditeur Lucien Parizeau », in Jacques Michon (1991), op. cit. : 51-52.

book graced the July 1946 cover of *Canadian Art* (Figure 4-58). In the same issue, Lucien Parizeau wrote about the “French Tradition in Publishing”.<sup>110</sup>

When I became a publisher, I felt that, while I followed the French tradition, I could add something new and specifically Canadian. I asked Robert La Palme, Jacques de Tonnancour, Lomer Mercier-Gouin and others to decorate my covers for two reasons. In the first place, I had always been interested in the graphic arts; the illustrated cover gave me satisfaction and I was sure it would have the same effect on my readers; it gave a fillip to the meal. In the second place, I look upon the cover as a poster to attract attention to the book. [...] The average French book cover is strictly typographical. Since I wanted a poster, it had to be posterish in style, simple, striking, in a few flat colours. I get the flat effect of the lithograph or offset by using “pastello” inks.<sup>111</sup>

LaPalme had made a definitive move towards working in colour: in gouache or poster paints, he considered this to be his painting, and soon sought as many outlets as possible.

His achievement in *Ristontac* drew an astute comparison from *Le Canada*:

[LaPalme] a voulu se reposer de la caricature des politiciens en allant jouer dans la cour quelques instants avec les plus jeunes politiciens. LaPalme est à l’art canadien ce qu’est Gratien Gélinas au théâtre canadien. Il peut faire sérieux, il peut même faire tragique mais il est à l’aise dans la bonne blague lancée d’un trait gentiment canaille.<sup>112</sup>

It was clearly important that Gélinas and LaPalme be seen as tossing off good jokes in a fine joshing spirit. But as we will see, they could indeed both delve into the serious and tragic, and the collaboration which joined their names together was steeped in age-old and quite painful matters for Québec.

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<sup>110</sup> Robert LaPalme, “Ristontac”, cover illustration for *Canadian Art* vol 3:4, July 1946.

<sup>111</sup> Lucien Parizeau, “The French Tradition in Publishing.” *Canadian Art* vol 3:4, July 1946: 145-149.

<sup>112</sup> R.G. [René Garneau], “Livres d’étrennes pour enfants.” *Le Canada*, December 17 1945: 5.

#### 4.2. LaPalme and *Fridolinons* 1945 : the « Entente très cordiale » stage-set

Robert LaPalme and playwright-actor Gratien Gélinas (1909-1999) were linked together in the public mind thanks to their collaboration for the February 1945 production of Gélinas's annual revue, *Fridolinons*. Alongside *Ristontac* and the "There's no Secret Weapon" series, LaPalme's contribution to *Fridolinons* was the third major colour project to emerge from the later war years. Gélinas' career paralleled that of LaPalme's, who was just one year Gélinas's elder. A graduate of the classical college system (unlike the intensively self-taught LaPalme), Gélinas had led a theatre-centred career since 1927, first with the Anciens du Collège de Montréal and then with the Montreal Repertory Theatre. He was a veteran of many plays, revues and radio serials when he created the character of Fridolin in the CKAC radio series *Le Carrousel de la gaieté* in 1937.<sup>113</sup> The character enjoyed instant success. The thirty-year-old actor and writer played a perennially-young *Gavroche* figure, an indeterminate boy-man dressed in a Montreal *Canadiens* hockey sweater, shorts and long socks, and sporting a workingman's cap and a slingshot. And as a *Gavroche*, Fridolin embodied the spirit of the celebrated child in Victor Hugo's 1862 novel of the 1830 July Revolution, *Les Misérables*. Dodging bullets until fatally caught while dancing on the barricades, Gavroche was often reincarnated in

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<sup>113</sup> A valuable introduction to Gratien Gélinas's *Fridolinons* series is found in the prefaces prepared by Laurent Mailhot for the complete editions of the *Fridolinons* scripts published by Quinze in the 1980s. See for example Laurent Mailhot, "Présentation" in Gratien Gélinas., *Fridolinades 1945 et 1946* (Montréal: Les Quinze, éditeur, 1980) : 7-17. The student of Gélinas's achievements should also consult the biographical memoirs written by Gélinas' grand-daughter. See Anne-Marie Sicotte, *Gratien Gélinas, du naïf Fridolin à l'ombrageux Tit-Coq* (Montréal : XYZ, 2001) and *Gratien Gélinas : la ferveur et le doute* (Montréal: Éditions Québec/Amérique, 1995). Gélinas' radio work is also considered by Pierre Pagé, *Le comique et l'humour à la radio québécoise : après des historiques et textes choisis, 1930-1970* (Montréal, Éditions La Presse, 1976) : 82-85. Mailhot's presentations to the *Fridolinons* series provide key bibliographic orientations.

journalists' assessments of the works of caricaturists. As we have already seen, Henri Julien and Robert LaPalme had both earned this *sobriquet* in critical reception. But Fridolin was a live performer who channelled the caricatural and satirical representation of the adult world through a fictitious child's body. He gathered together his friends for backyard performances. His sketches lampooned the mores and actions of Québec's political and social elites through the spaces and lives of East End Montréal and its denizens, anticipating Michel Tremblay. Gélinas presented the first *Fridolinons* revue in 1938; 1945 was the last of a series of annual, wholly original revues, to be followed by reprise editions in 1946 and 1956. Over the first eight editions, the political tenor had increased in intensity as Québec lived through the war and the conscription crisis: Québec's torn political and social identity was treated with candour and rocambolesque humour. In 1945, Gélinas introduced more serious treatments of the challenges faced by the individual within the competing demands of his society. In particular, the sketch *Le départ du conscrit*, which would be followed in the 1946 revue by *Le retour du conscrit* (one of the few new pieces in what was otherwise an anthology of the best of *Fridolinons*), presaged the Tit-Coq character to whom Gélinas devoted a full-length eponymous play in 1948. This was the first runaway international success of the Québec stage.

At the centre of the 1945 edition of *Fridolinons* was Gélinas's and LaPalme's collaboration, "Histoire de faire de l'histoire". This parodic treatment of Canadian history arose from Gélinas's amused response to the polemic raging over the teaching of

Canadian history in Canadian schools.<sup>114</sup> Particularly sensitive was the issue of the differences in teaching Canadian history according to the language of the school population. In Québec, the teaching of history had been indissociable from the projects of nationalism ever since the 1840 *Histoire du Canada depuis sa découverte jusqu'à nos jours* in which François-Xavier Garneau (1809-1866) had answered Lord Durham's notorious assertion that French Canadians were a people without history. As we have seen, in LaPalme's and Gélinas's time it was Lionel Groulx, revered beacon of nationalist aspirations, who embodied the very idea and practice of French Canada's history in his writings and teachings and through his position as the first Chair of Canadian history at the Université de Montréal. At Groulx's feet was gathered the generation of André Laurendeau.

LaPalme had very recently mocked this position in his caricatures aimed at the Bloc national and its leader André Laurendeau. A copy of Groulx's *Notre maître le passé* was found littering the caricatures' fictional setting, when Groulx was himself not scampering away in the background. When *Le Devoir* had angrily demanded that LaPalme have the

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<sup>114</sup> Anne Marie Sicotte explains the sketch's origins: « Le 27 décembre [1944], Gratien envoie un mot au caricaturiste Robert LaPalme, qui travaille et expose à New York, pour le sketch *Histoire du Canada*. Plusieurs mois plus tôt, Gratien a découpé un article de journal qui explique le contexte dont il s'inspire pour le sketch. "Depuis quelques semaines, l'on entend beaucoup parler d'adopter au Canada un seul manuel d'histoire qui serait enseigné dans toutes les écoles de notre pays. Une polémique se poursuit dans les journaux entre ceux qui s'opposent à cette uniformisation arbitraire, qui équivaudrait à une espèce de caporalisme intellectuel, et ceux qui voient dans un manuel conçu dans un esprit bon-ententiste, la solution de tous nos problèmes nationaux" (Roger Duhamel, *Le Bloc*, 12 August 1944; the polemic in question refers to the works by Abbé Maheux and chanoine Groulx referred to below, n. 17). Sicotte continues: "Gratien demande à LaPalme une toile sur l'histoire de la prise de Québec, et il suggère quelques sujets: 'Camaraderie de Wolfe et Montcalm – Révolte de 1837-38 (parade ou démonstration d'étudiants) – Déportation des Acadiens (partis en pique-nique) – Les indigènes avant la conquête du Canada par l'Angleterre (hommes des cavernes). Si tu trouves d'autres sujets, cher grand caricaturiste, ne te gêne pas.' Début janvier, Gratien a terminé le premier jet de ses deux monologues et du sketch accompagnant la toile de LaPalme." See Anne-Marie Sicotte (1995): 182-187.

courage of naming Groulx as his target in at least one caricature, *Le Canada* had answered wryly that *Le Devoir* could take comfort: the target was not the Abbé Maheux. It was indeed a polemic between Maheux and Groulx that lay at the basis of the Gélinas-LaPalme “Histoire de faire de l’histoire.”

In a series of talks given on Radio-Canada in 1943, the abbé Maheux had asked, “Pourquoi sommes-nous divisés?” It was a way of calling for a renewed sense of unity and understanding between French and English Canadians in the wake of the bitterly divisive conscription crisis. The talks covered a great many arenas of national and civic life. Maheux sought to both explain and confirm differences, but also to show how the two linguistic communities shared goals and beliefs. Two of the thorniest arenas tackled in these talks were, to be sure, religion and education, which after all were the two areas of civil rights guaranteed to all Canadians by the constitutional provisions of the British North America Act of 1867. The BNA Act was described countless times by politicians of all sides in the war years and in the 1945-1960 period as a “pact between two founding peoples” – a statement we shall have cause to revisit. The Act and the Confederation which it framed had been under constant attack in the 1930s and through the war years, especially with the Conscription crisis. A perennial element of Québec’s nationalist discourse held that the already flawed provisions of the Act for linguistic and religious freedom had, in any case, been hopelessly compromised and invalidated by a succession of federal and provincial government initiatives. The divergences in the teaching of history in French and English Canada were soundly articulated around the divergent interpretations of the causes, purposes and effects of Confederation on the aspirations and

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development of the two “founding races”. When Maheux suggested mildly in his talk on education that it might be useful to provide for a *joint* teaching of history, in which the same narrative might be offered to children irrespective of language, the nationalist response was fierce, flaying, and not long in coming. Lionel Groulx riposted with an address, given at the Monument National in November 1943, entitled “Pourquoi nous sommes divisés”. It was published immediately by *L’Action nationale* under André Laurendeau and re-issued in an English edition in 1944.<sup>115</sup> Playing on words in this way was doubtless in keeping with the tenor of the times. In January 1945, just days before the opening of *Fridolinons 1945*, Edmond Turcotte, editor of *Le Canada*, returned his own punning retort against Lionel Groulx. Thus, he titled a speech given to Senator T.-D. Bouchard’s Institut démocratique canadien “Notre maître le passé démocratique.”

*Fridolinons 1945* opened on February 4, 1945 at the Monument National.<sup>116</sup> The first act opened with a prologue entitled *Le Flop populaire*. It also included a monologue in which Fridolin intimately reviewed the events of the past year with his audience. Presciently, he asked about Duplessis: “Parlant de Maurice, il paraît qu’il s’oppose aux allocations familiales. Ce serait-y qu’il aurait l’intention de rester garçon?”<sup>117</sup> The second act began with the curtain rising on a huge canvas prepared by Robert LaPalme. “Histoire de faire de l’histoire” was divided into two *tableaux*. In *L’entente très cordiale*,

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<sup>115</sup> See Abbé Arthur Maheux, *Pourquoi sommes-nous divisés? : causeries radiophoniques présentées et transmises par les postes du réseau français de Radio-Canada* (Montréal : Radio-Canada, 1943); Lionel Groulx, *Pourquoi nous sommes divisés : une réponse du chanoine Lionel Groulx* (Montréal : les Éditions de l’Action nationale, 1943) and *Why we are divided / a reply from Canon Lionel Groulx ; an address delivered at the Monument national (Montreal) on November 29, 1943, under the auspices of the Ligue d’action nationale* (Montreal, [L’Action nationale] 1944).

<sup>116</sup> Gratien Gélinas (1980): 18.



Fridolin, armed with a very long pointing stick, elucidated the meanings of all the components of LaPalme's canvas. The second tableau, *La danse des plaines d'Abraham*, featured two "armies" of chorus girls who provided the dancing entertainment that was requisite for an audience weaned on variety shows, vaudeville and burlesque, and on stage and on radio.

The very idea of an *Entente cordiale* would perhaps be laden with deep irony for a French-Canadian Montréal audience in early 1945. The term suggested a bewildering array of historically alternating suspicions and optimisms. It was redolent of the thaw between Great Britain and France under King Edward VII. It connoted the very idea of a confederation between "two founding peoples" in Canada. More recently it had enjoyed a sarcastic use by Olivar Asselin at *L'Ordre*, and had been abused by Paul Bouchard (and Jean-Louis Gagnon) at *La Nation*. Fridolin unravelled these ideas as he strolled in front of LaPalme's canvas. With a bewildering array of wildly desporting figures applied as so many undulating bodies flickering in decorative positive/negative rhythms, the canvas developed fully LaPalme's monumental mural style, effectively taking the play of black-and-white alternation in his brush-and-ink caricatures to the extremes made possible by the use of boldly-chosen, complex and sinuous areas of flatly-applied colour. There was no pretence of coherent fictitious space. Yet LaPalme sent figures careening forwards and backwards through apparently random changes in scale. Figures scatter in often amorous chases. Forms overlap and interpenetrate. Hands and feet are huge, mostly three-fingered or -toed, mouths are agape, lips pronounced, and the occasional penis and nipples are seen flapping through clothing. Tongues protrude from countless faces that have no

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.: 47.

eyes or ears. With cherries for testicles and a maple leaf replacing the fig leaf that traditionally hides genitalia in art, but that is to be rarely found “dans la paroisse”, the highly sexualised bodies mingle with laughing horses, and an outdoor toilet in flames: this system of shape-signs was as so many leaping flames wrought into human resemblance. From time to time, a more discrete (although hardly ever discreet) reference was legible: a shoe buckle; a ship’s sails with a royal emblem, the fur of a dog, the fleur-de-lys then invading Québec’s symbolic space, looking for all the world, especially in this context, like a surrogate penis.

Gélinas’s commentary pulled in two directions. The painting exemplifies modern art, which no-one can understand, and therefore needs explaining.

Vous vous demandez ce que c’est, hein? Eh bien, moi aussi, au début je ne comprenais rien là-dedans. Mais énervez-vous pas, je vais tout vous expliquer [...]. Alors ce dessin-là servirait, voyez-vous, à illustrer le nouveau manuel d’histoire du Canada. Je vais vous l’expliquer... il est à l’endroit, toujours? (Rassuré) Mais oui! Un type qui explique un machin comme celui-là, il a pas l’impression de perdre son temps!<sup>118</sup>

These remarks as to the nature of modern art weave in and out of Fridolin’s exposition of the problem: history has always taught us that the French and English have been doing nothing but fighting, and a committee has been formed to draft a new history book to disprove this. The opponents are just taking tea! So much for those determined to

désunir notre pays et donner aux vaillants “French pea soups” que nous sommes un complexe de vaincu! Vous le voyez, Montcalm? Attendez, je vais vous aider à le localiser... La tache blanche, ici, c’est sa perruque, croyez-le ou non. Et ça, c’est supposé être sa tête, avec son nez... sa bouche. Comme vous le constatez, ça a l’air à peu près de tout, excepté une tête. C’est parce que c’est de la peinture

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<sup>118</sup> This and the following excerpts from Fridolin’s commentary are cited from Gratien Gélinas, op. cit.: 103-115.

moderne, voyez-vous. Un bon peintre moderne qui dessine une vache, par exemple, c'est beaucoup mieux si sa vache a pas l'air d'une vache. Ce serait même un succès remarquable si sa vache avait l'air d'une montre-bracelet.

Gélinas's commentary and LaPalme's raucous designs touch frequently on matters of ethnic belonging. A dog gnawing a bone, waiting for revenge, might have once become the French-Canadian national symbol; but a Saint James street businessman disguised as a French artist is whitewashing the dog into a docile sheep, ready for St John the Baptist. Some thirty years earlier, Olivar Asselin, briefly president of the Société St Jean Baptiste had in his short tenure just as briefly jettisoned the otherwise perennial sheep as the French Canadian symbol. Not far away are *Indiens* being civilised by alcohol. The 1837-38 rebellion was a pack of lies: it was simply a parade by Université de Montréal students. Within the parade, a couple of social science students practice a "French Kiss"; beyond their embrace, the university – an outdoor privy at best – burns merrily. The Acadiens were not deported, but went on a picnic on the good ship *Bonne Entente*.

Perhaps nodding at the needling criticisms that LaPalme had endured at the hands of *Le Devoir* in 1944, Fridolin confided to the audience: " (En confidence.) Incidemment j'ai été grassement payé pour faire ce sketch-là. Je peux pas vous dire par qui, cependant. Pour parler comme "Le Devoir" disons qu'il s'agit de puissances occultes."<sup>119</sup>

The reputation of *Le Devoir* in 1945 could hardly be more contrasted to the one it would enjoy after 1947 under Gérard Filion and André Laurendeau. In 1945, finding conspiracies behind the political actions of its society, it was made to the measure of its

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

decline in the final years of director Georges Pelletier's tenure. It adhered to a politically extreme-right position familiar to both Québec and France. And despite the changes imminent in 1947, we will see that the presence of the "puissance occulte" would remain important in the constitution of satirical discourse around the operations of power in the Duplessis era.

#### 4.3. Painting, illustration and caricature, 1947-51

*Fridolinons 1945* was a great commercial and artistic success for Gélinas and his troupe, and for Robert LaPalme. Gélinas was delighted with the result, and wrote to LaPalme in New York a few weeks later: "Le numéro grâce à ton talent est un des meilleurs de la revue. Les blagues visuelles qui sont de ton propre cru, comme les noyaux de cerise et la feuille d'érable, sont sûrement les plus gras rires du numéro."<sup>120</sup> *Le Devoir*, oddly enough, was glad to find the revue a little less Rabelaisian than usual.<sup>121</sup> *La Presse* duly noted that Fridolin was adopting the attitude of a certain well-known conciliatory historian.<sup>122</sup> Charles Hamel, in *Le Jour*, noticed the resemblance to the canvases of LaPalme's rejected Valcartier series, "Histoire de la guerre à travers les âges" – the French title given to "There's no Secret Weapon".<sup>123</sup>

LaPalme had repaired to New York in order to exhibit the series at the Bonestell Gallery.

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<sup>120</sup> Anne-Marie Sicotte (1995): 187.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.: 189.

<sup>122</sup> Marcel Valois, « Fridolinons '45 ». *La Presse*, 5 February 1945

<sup>123</sup> Émile Charles Hamel, *Le Jour* February 1945

Thus the mural-style canvas carried out for *Fridolinons 1945* did not so much announce a new career strand in the theatre as confirm LaPalme's ambitions to develop his career through exhibitions as a painter. This effort would closely follow LaPalme's presence in publications. A certain sense of frustration or, at least, of the efforts required in the Québec marketplace, emanated from both aspects of the plan. The "There's no Secret Weapon" series was exhibited again at the end of 1945, from December 7 through 22, at the galleries of the Art Association of Montreal. A surviving printed invitation in the archives of the École des beaux-arts de Montréal shows that the *vernissage* was sponsored by the "direction de l'Institut Démocratique Canadien". It was for this organization headed by T.-D. Bouchard that Edmond Turcotte had delivered his reply to Lionel Groulx. The invitation bore an example of the cover illustration for the Lucien Parizeau edition of Voltaire's *Zadig*.<sup>124</sup> The *Lumières*-inspired, humanist credentials of LaPalme were impeccable.

But another more important publication ostensibly lay in waiting for LaPalme. In late 1945 appeared the first of Parizeau's *Cahiers noirs* series, *Cinquante dessins d'Alfred Pellan* with a preface by *Le Canada* critic Eloi de Grandmont. *Cahiers noirs* echoed a series title first briefly used in 1935 by fellow Asselin disciple Jean-Louis Gagnon in the wake of *Vivre*. De Grandmont's introduction was followed by both English and Spanish translations, anticipating distribution throughout the Americas. Plans were announced to follow up with issues devoted to Alexander Calder and a "retrospective" edition for Robert LaPalme, going back to his 1932 beginnings. But as was the case with the projected volume of "There's no Secret Weapon" announced in the August 1944 issue of

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<sup>124</sup> Dossier Robert LaPalme, Bibliothèque des arts, Université du Québec à Montréal.

the *Revue Populaire*, no volume devoted solely to LaPalme ever appeared at Éditions Lucien Parizeau, which went bankrupt later in 1946. LaPalme would have to wait until 1950 before seeing a retrospective publication of his work into print, at the Cercle du Livre de France.

Undeterred, LaPalme concentrated on opportunities to continue to exhibit the war weapons series and to keep his name in the wider Canadian public realm. His identification with the figure – indeed, with the nose - of Maurice Duplessis, was now more and more celebrated. A September 1946 notice on *Ristontac* by Guy Jasmin in *Le Canada* made this clear, if allusively. “LaPalme, caricaturiste, évoque par la coïncidence d’un seul détail, un collaborateur de Daumier, Gilbert Randon, qui, en 1850, prit pour objectif le nez du président de la IIe République et, disent les dictionnaires, s’en donna à cœur joie jusqu’au coup d’état.” Jasmin also noted that in the work of the illustrator and muralist, a world of new forms and colours was emerging. LaPalme’s mural figuration vocabulary had already infiltrated his caricatures in 1943-44 and would do so more and more openly through the late 1940s. He established a new hybrid of flattened form-signs which transformed into volumetric shorthand descriptive passages of physiognomy. The riotous and burlesque approach to human form in *L’Entente très cordiale* would also be aligned to psychological description, which would deepen over time in the case of the depiction of Maurice Duplessis.

In 1946, Guy Jasmin and the other critics identifying LaPalme with Duplessis were not envisaging so very long an identification; after all, the Second Republic had been on its

last legs in 1850, while in the present the Duplessis era was just hitting its stride. The strength of the identification between caricaturist and subject was accordingly just beginning to be recognised. LaPalme was daily prosecuting the enemy in the pages of *Le Canada*. With his friend and supporter Jean-Louis Gagnon as colleague and correspondent for *Time magazine*, LaPalme occasionally gained another pan-Canadian English outlet for his work in Gagnon's reports from Québec. This augmented LaPalme's appearances in the lesser-circulated *Canadian Art*. In late 1945 and early 1946, LaPalme also contributed portrait caricatures, rather than situational graphic satires, to *Le Jour* in the last months before its funding was withdrawn as Liberal business grandes acquiesced in the new *Pax Duplessica*.<sup>125</sup>

LaPalme took his war paintings under the name "Nothing New Under The Sun" to the Fine Art Galleries at Eaton's on College Street in Toronto. At *Saturday Night*, which printed four illustrations of the series, Paul Duval confirmed LaPalme's growing status.

His carrot-nosed figure of Québec Premier Maurice Duplessis is now as famous, in its way, as David Low's Colonel Blimp. A less subtle draughtsman than Low, but possessed of a much more decorative fancy, La Palme may be placed, I believe, among the top-flight political cartoonists active anywhere today. [...] How Torontonians [...] will react to these La Palme creations will be interesting to record. But they are not so very far from Walt Disney and Edmund Dulac that they should prove indigestible, however much the Miro-like patterning and

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<sup>125</sup> In his biography *Jean-Charles Harvey le combattant*, Yves Lavertu turned to Jean-Louis Gagnon to explain the end of Harvey's endeavour. "Né de l'émergence d'une conjoncture précise, pense-t-il, *Le Jour* s'est éteint avec elle. En d'autres mots, le soutien financier apporté à l'hebdo répondait au besoin des bailleurs de fond de conjurer une préoccupation typique des gens d'affaires, c'est-à-dire l'instabilité économique. Dans la seconde moitié des années 1930, celle-ci a pour nom l'Union nationale et le fascisme en marche. Avec la fin de la guerre, les capitalistes anglophones ont cessé de voir dans *Le Jour* une nécessité, le spectre des désordres redoutés avec l'avènement du fascisme étant disparu. Quant à Duplessis, qui est de retour au pouvoir en 1944, cet establishment a choisi de négocier la paix avec lui." See Yves Lavertu, *Jean-Charles Harvey le Combattant* (Montréal, Boréal, 2000) : 389. Senator T.-D. Bouchard recuperated *Le Jour*'s mailing list and personnel into *Le Clairon*, later the *Haut Parleur* (see below).

anatomical distortions might disturb the Toronto citizen's sense of pictorial propriety.<sup>126</sup>

LaPalme had deployed the carrot-nose in a political pamphlet created for the federal Liberal Party's campaign in the Beauce riding in the 1945 election that returned Mackenzie King to power.<sup>127</sup> But his realm was more and more national and international, and still closely tied to the Liberal administration and its institutions. The daily caricaturist's career refashioned after 1943 at *Le Canada* would now steadily continue to include book illustrations, advertising, poster design and exhibitions until early 1951.

LaPalme's illustration assignments slowed somewhat after the demise of Éditions Lucien Parizeau in 1946, but certainly did not cease altogether. In 1948 appeared two volumes by Jean-Pierre Bonneville with covers by LaPalme: *Le Banquet nocturne*, a volume of prose poems, and a literary study titled *De Valdombre à André Gide*.<sup>128</sup> LaPalme also decorated the front cover of the winter 1948 special issue of *Canadian Art* magazine devoted to Québec art (Figure 4-59). The illustration lampooned stereotypes of Québec. The issue included advertising by the Québec government (in an election year), extolling its support of the arts with allocations of \$850,000 to culture; the advertisement announced that the government was "proud of its sons and daughters and doing

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<sup>126</sup> Paul Duval, "Robert LaPalme's Paintings are Witty Comment on Warfare". *Saturday Night* (Toronto), March 4 1946.

<sup>127</sup> "La Vie au château : conte pour enfants ayant droit de vote / [recueillie & enluminée par Fra Lapalmus]." [Montréal?] : [s.n.], [1945].

<sup>128</sup> The volumes by Jean-Pierre Bonneville were *Le Banquet nocturne : petits poèmes en prose* and *De Valdombre à André Gide*, both published at Val d'Or [Québec], Éditions des Quatre-saisons, 1948.



everything in its power to support the liberal arts”; it also informed the reader that the École des arts graphiques had been established under the Department of Social Welfare and Youth. The issue also featured a survey of Quebec painting by Jean Paul Lemieux and a report on the Art Association of Montreal by Robert Ayre (noting the challenges faced in 1948 through needs to expand and meet its civic duty). In “Recent trends in Montréal Painting” Paul Dumas wrote: “Let us mention finally a man whose frantic imagination has raised caricature to the level of real art, ‘le grand’ Robert LaPalme.”<sup>129</sup> LaPalme also featured in a review of the annual of Les ateliers d'arts graphiques. Exemplifying the work of the Atelier’s pupils, the album was jointly edited by Louis-Philippe Beaudouin, Albert Dumouchel and Arthur Gladu. It featured reproductions of mural painting by Pellán, two designs for a calendar by La Palme, works by Mimi Parent and Pierre Gauvreau, and especially *Les Arbres dans la nuit*, “a pinnacle of achievement in Paul-Émile Borduas’ latest style.”<sup>130</sup>

In historiographical terms, 1948 is deemed important for Québec art beyond the indices afforded by this issue of *Canadian Art*, since this was the year of the two manifestoes, *Refus Global* and *Prisme d’Yeux*. Yet LaPalme’s presence at ground level in *Canadian Art* magazine gives us a sense of his importance to his contemporaries. LaPalme’s sympathies clearly lay, then and later, with the group around his friend Alfred Pellán. He affectionately lampooned both the Automatistes and Pellán in his caricatures at *Le Canada* and *Le Devoir* (Figure 1-14 and Figure 4-60). He certainly defended the Borduas

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<sup>129</sup> In *Canadian Art* (V5: 3, Winter 1948, 120-127): 127.

<sup>130</sup> Guy Sylvestre, “Les ateliers d’arts graphiques no. 2, 1947”. [Book review]. *Op. cit.*, 152.

group's prerogative in following the paths it chose.<sup>131</sup> Far from seeing his caricatures of them as critical, he felt that he afforded them publicity that was inevitably supportive. His own chosen position, to invest the extreme edges of humorous representation in the hinterland where its mural and decorative deployment was most akin to the achievements of Pellán, could cause confusion in some critics' eyes. In a review of the 1946 play *La nuit des rois*, the previous year's Fridolinons set was mistakenly attributed to Pellán.<sup>132</sup> This was the source of some resentment on LaPalme's part, since he later felt that he was an unacknowledged source of Pellán's style.<sup>133</sup> But in the late 1940s and 1950s, their relationship was competitive and good-natured and Pellán did certainly pay tribute to his friend for his leadership in caricature.<sup>134</sup> And while LaPalme's mural decoration style essentially served as the basis for the repeated exhibition of his painting cycles and a single theatre project, Pellán would invest the arena of theatre sets and costumes with far more determination. In 1948, the "There's No Secret Weapon" series was presented as part of an exhibition of Canadian war art organized and circulated by the National Gallery of Canada to Brazil. Grouping the paintings by LaPalme alongside those of Michael Forster, Carl Schaefer, William Ogilvie and Jack Nichols, the exhibition was shown in Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro from January 9 through April 15.<sup>135</sup> This was but

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<sup>131</sup> LaPalme (1997): 104.

<sup>132</sup> D. O'L. [Dostaler O'Leary], "Au Gésu. 'La nuit des rois' chez les Compagnons". *La Patrie*, March 25<sup>th</sup> 1946.

<sup>133</sup> LaPalme nonetheless vigorously defended his friend's work, arguing for its equal importance to that of Borduas in an open letter to Marcelle Ferron published in *Le Devoir* in 1979. See LaPalme (1997) : 109-111.

<sup>134</sup> "[...] tu es le grand novateur et tu l'as prouvé continuellement. Ce que tu as réalisé est à la hauteur des plus grands caricaturistes du monde. » Extract of a letter from Alfred Pellán to Robert LaPalme dated August 14th 1967, reprinted in LaPalme 1997: 103.

one of several exhibitions presented in South America by the National Gallery in this period, and the second to be organized by Jean Désy, Canada's ambassador to Brazil from 1941 to 1947; the first took place in 1944.<sup>136</sup> The Canadian diplomatic corps' increased attention to Latin America in this period followed on Canada's longstanding involvement with Brazil and the geopolitical reconfigurations of Canadian foreign policy after US entry into the Second World War.<sup>137</sup>

The National Gallery detached the LaPalme paintings and presented them alone in a one-man show in at the University of Rome in Spring 1949, again under the auspices of Jean Désy.<sup>138</sup> Désy was Canada's ambassador to Italy from late 1947 until 1952, when he was seconded to a commission investigating left-wing bias at Radio-Canada.<sup>139</sup> The "There's No Secret Weapon" paintings were now complemented by LaPalme's painting cycle "A

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<sup>135</sup> Two listings in the records of the National Gallery of Canada available through the internet give different titles for this exhibition project. The online compendium of the history of NGC exhibitions lists it as *Canadian War Art exhibition*. ([http://www.gallery.ca/english/default\\_2107.htm](http://www.gallery.ca/english/default_2107.htm)) The online archives list an entry for an exhibition coinciding in both dates and content but with the title *Five contemporary Canadian Artists*. Notes: "Shown at the Municipal Library, Sao Paolo, Brazil, Jan 9, 1948-[date unknown]; Ministry of Education, Rio de Janeiro, April 2-15, 1948. Exhibition arranged by Jean Désy, Canadian Ambassador in Brazil with the co-operation of the National Gallery of Canada and the Government Exhibition Commission."

<sup>136</sup> See our discussion of Jean Désy and Jean-Louis Gagnon above.

<sup>137</sup> [25 Nov./nov. - 15 Dec./déc, 1944.] *Pintura canadense contemporanea*. [organized by Jean Désy, Canadian Ambassador to Brazil, in co-operation with the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ont., and others / organisée par Jean Désy, l'ambassadeur canadien au Brésil, conjointement avec la Galerie nationale du Canada, Ottawa, Ont., entre autres]

<sup>138</sup> Online catalogue, Archives, National Gallery of Canada, Works by Robert LaPalme [exhibition records]. Notes: "Shown at the University of Rome, Italy, May 14-21, 1949. Exhibition comprised of works by LaPalme which were previously shown in Brazil in conjunction with Canadian war art. Exhibition arranged by Jean Désy in co-operation with the National Gallery of Canada and the Government Exhibition Commission."

<sup>139</sup> The website of Foreign affairs Canada gives a useful summary of Désy's career at <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/canada-magazine/issue08/8t8-en.asp> (March 18, 2006).

History of Medicine through the Ages”, a project which had already materialised as a set of calendars published in Montréal in 1947 with commentaries by Robert Ayre.<sup>140</sup>

Both series were then presented at Paris in January 1950 at the Galerie des Beaux-Arts, under the auspices of Canadian ambassador Georges Vanier who presumably had had cause to revise his initial rejection of the series in 1942.<sup>141</sup> More important perhaps was the role of the cultural attaché, Fulgence Charpentier, erstwhile Franco-Ontarian man of the theatre and former francophone co-director of Canada’s press censorship bureau during the Second World War. The very violence of LaPalme’s colour was held in press reports and by Charpentier in a radio broadcast, to be quintessentially reflective of Canadian spaces and light, in ways which were perhaps intended to challenge the growing dominance of the Group of Seven.<sup>142</sup>

By year’s end, the war series was the focus of the inaugural exhibition of the Agnès Lefort Gallery. It was sponsored by the Jeunesse libérale association and coincided with the launch of a retrospective volume devoted to LaPalme’s career. Although we will

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<sup>140</sup> Robert LaPalme, *La médecine à travers les âges* [calendriers illustrés par Robert Lapalme ; commentaires par Robert Ayre] Montréal : Ayerst, McKenna & Harrison, 1947.

<sup>141</sup> The involvement of Vanier is also stated in LaPalme (1950): 145. The information is followed by the assertion that the paintings then enjoyed unprecedented success at Montreal; the exhibition referred to was that which inaugurated the Agnès Lefort Gallery, at which this retrospective volume was launched. A two-page publication titled *Exposition des oeuvres de Robert LaPalme* (Paris: Galerie des Beaux-Arts, 1950) is held in the library of the National Gallery of Canada.

<sup>142</sup> Vanier and Charpentier’s roles in the exhibition are confirmed in a despatch from Agence France Presse (Jean Gagnon, “Robert La Palme à la Galerie des Beaux-Arts, de Paris”, *La Presse*, January 7 1950: p. X. The article quotes Charpentier’s radio talk on the exhibition, when he noted that the vigorous colour schemes were due to “l’appel des grands espaces, des paysages immenses, de la vibration, de la lumière sous le ciel vigoureux des provinces de l’est. Si LaPalme n’est pas l’exemple le plus caractéristique de la peinture canadienne, il est véritablement canadien par la richesse et la variété de ses couleurs, par son enthousiasme et sa verve, par son originalité et sa fraîcheur.”

return to this publication below, it is worth noting that Jean-Louis Gagnon took up, in his presentation of LaPalme for this retrospective, the theme of the 'Canadian-ness' of LaPalme's colour choices, in terms not dissimilar to Charpentier's. LaPalme's paintings were further consecrated by a final exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada in early 1951, at which the Gallery distributed a supplementary catalogue under the title "The History of War".<sup>143</sup>

In 1950, LaPalme finally achieved the goal of seeing into print a retrospective edition of his career to date: *Les 20 premières années du caricaturiste canadien/The First Twenty Years of the Canadian caricaturist: La Palme*. Prefaced by Gratien Gélinas and with a presentation of LaPalme by Jean-Louis Gagnon, the volume was a bilingual publication of the Cercle du Livre de France.<sup>144</sup> As we have noted, it appeared in time for LaPalme's exhibition at Galerie Agnès Lefort in December 1950. This initiative was one more example of the changes wrought in North American book publishing by the exile of so many French citizens to the United States and Canada in the Second World War, and of LaPalme's successful networking through the political and commercial institutions of this era. The Cercle du Livre de France (CLF) was established at New York City in 1947 by Charles Spilka and Horace Marston, two American businessmen, as a postal-order book club for francophone readers in the US. Because of the heavy Montréal readership of the Sunday *New York Times* book review section, the principal avenue for CLF advertising,

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<sup>143</sup> Garry Mainprize, "The National Gallery of Canada : A Hundred Years of Exhibition." *RACAR* XI/1-2: 31.

<sup>144</sup> Robert LaPalme, *Les 20 premières années du caricaturiste canadien/The First twenty years of the Canadian caricaturist : La Palme*. Translated by Irene and Charles Spilka. Prefaced by Gratien Gélinas and with a presentation by Jean-Louis Gagnon. Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1950.

Québec furnished the great majority of CLF subscribers. A Montréal office was established under the direction of French businessman and publisher Pierre Tisseyre. He had known Spilka since 1939 when both had joined the Information Office of the US Army. Tisseyre had subsequently returned to France and military service. As the representative of interests with sums sequestered by Canada during the war, he travelled to Ottawa in 1945 to recuperate these funds and was mandated to invest in publishing enterprises from Montréal. Crucially, Tisseyre was connected to LaPalme through Spilka's US colleague Horace Marston, who recommended the retrospective volume as a worthy book project to Tisseyre.<sup>145</sup> LaPalme's captions, alongside Gélinas' and Gagnon's texts, were translated into English by Charles Spilka and his spouse, Irene.

This volume was and remains the single most comprehensive source of iconographic material by Robert LaPalme. It was organized in strict chronological order. The first half of the book (to p. 94) covers LaPalme's productions for the *Almanac de la langue française* (1933-1935), *La Patrie* (listed as 1934, but having appeared in 1933), *L'Ordre* (1934), *La Renaissance* (1935), Chicago's *Ringmaster* (1936), various caricatures from Philadelphia and New York publications (1936-1937), Ottawa's *Le Droit* (1937) *Le Journal* (Québec, 1937-1938), *L'action catholique* (1940, with none from the 1941-43 period), assorted by several freelance items for Trois-Rivières's *Bien Public* and the magazine *Autoclub*. None of the Adolf caricatures from *L'Événement-Journal* are reprinted. The focus for the whole 1932-1943 era is given over to portrait caricature, with LaPalme's topical work at Québec City missing altogether. The second half of the book focuses on the seven years in which LaPalme held the daily caricaturist's chair at *Le*

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<sup>145</sup> Jacques Michon (2004) : 334-335.

*Canada* and branched out into illustrations for books, magazines and theatre poster. On pages 129-144, the pastello ink process celebrated by Lucien Parizeau can be verified through the striking solid-colour reprintings of LaPalme's work as it had been featured in the cover illustrations for Parizeau's list and for the ideas magazine *La Nouvelle Relève*, published by Robert Charbonneau and Claude Hurtubise. Although the quality of paper used for these pages is very poor, the ambitious printing process makes any surviving copy of this edition a precious witness to an important moment in Québec book illustration. The colour work reproduced includes the *Ristontac* illustration used as the cover for *Canadian Art*, alongside the covers for *Zadig*, *Vent du Large*, *La révolution chinoise*, *Jazz*, *Gandhi* and *Contes de La Bécasse*. The *Nouvelle Relève* covers give us Jean Bruchési, Roger Duhamel, Édouard Montpetit, Robert Choquette, Henri Laugier and Jean Désy, the latter looking for all the world like a diplomatic Jiminy Cricket (Figure 4-61). The visual language hovers between the biomorphic shapes of Jan Arp and LaPalme's 1930s geometric style. The caricature portrait is still invested with a sense of decorum which does not necessarily contaminate LaPalme's daily graphic satire.

This section of the book is followed by another, printed in monochrome sepia, devoted to the extracts of the critical reception to LaPalme's series presented here as "There are No Secret Weapons" [emphasis added] and the "History of Medicine through the Ages". The reviews are taken from publications in New York, Montréal, Toronto, Sao Paolo, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, Paris and Brussels. The monochrome reproductions of the two cycles of paintings show their absolute fidelity to the decorative principles laid out in "Histoire de faire de l'histoire." The cycles also read like a laboratory of satirical forms to be re-

used later. In particular, the allusions to sorcery and alchemy in the panel “La médecine au moyen-âge” prefigure much of the satirical language LaPalme would redeploy around Maurice Duplessis beginning in 1952. The section is rounded out with portrait caricatures, graphic satires and emblematic works for *Le Jour*, *The Nation* (New York) and designs for a National Film Board of Canada production, *The Story of Fashion*.

The remainder of the book is taken up with an assortment of more recent work, including portrayals of the casts of the film “Séraphin” (1948) taken from Claude-Henri Grignon’s *Un homme et son péché* (1934), and of Gratien Gélinas’s *Tit-Coq* (1948), for which LaPalme also designed the poster, on its hundredth performance. Reminiscent of the work of Al Hirschfeld (1903-2003) in the *New York Times*, notably as illustrations to its Sunday edition theatre reviews, these cast ensemble caricature portraits attest to LaPalme’s position as a visual spokesman for contemporary Québec cultural life. They furthered with panache and celebratory humour the “gloires nationales” series begun as long ago as *L’Ordre*. The closing pages of the retrospective feature illustrations from 1950, for *L’Âge ingrat*, the sequel to 1948’s *Vissouville* both also published by the Cercle du Livre de France, and for ... *Denrées périssables*, the compendium of satirical editorials by Gerard Filion from *Le Devoir*.

At December 1950, LaPalme had barely two months’ work ahead of him at *Le Canada*. In effect, with the Cercle du Livre de France retrospective, LaPalme closed the door on his *Le Canada* career, before he moved to *Le Devoir* and to a professional life far less given to the intricate criss-crossing of illustration, exhibition and caricature that had



marked the last six years. Jean-Louis Gagnon's insights in the presentation of his friend in *Les vingt premières années...*, perhaps inadvertently, explain just why this is so.

Gagnon echoed the words used by Fulgence Charpentier with respect to LaPalme's use of colour:

[...] il ne fait aucun doute que, de tous les peintres canadiens, Robert LaPalme est le plus répandu à l'étranger. Le succès de Robert LaPalme s'explique, sans doute, par la qualité de son dessin; par l'originalité et la verve de sa peinture[...] c'est la couleur typiquement canadienne de ces gouaches qui a retenu davantage l'attention du critique d'art. Cette couleur n'est pas inventée puisqu'elle exprime parfaitement le milieu canadien. L'étonnante clarté des horizons, la lumière d'un ciel généralement dégagé, la réverbération propre aux terres enneigées, aux nuits blanches d'aurores boréales et aux paysages mouillés de lacs innombrables, la coloration des Laurentides quand vient l'automne et le cristal des arbres couverts de verglas ont conditionné, en quelque sorte, l'élaboration d'une peinture canadienne.<sup>146</sup>

If this assessment seems prone to an auto-seduction, indicative of the need to ground a Canadian art practice in a reference to landscape in 1950, it opens a comparison that had no place for LaPalme's satire and graphic attack. At the same time, Gagnon could assert, more succinctly, those things which truly conditioned LaPalme's work, and which formed the basis of his fundamental allegiance to journalism.

J'ai toujours considéré LaPalme comme un journaliste. Il partage avec Edmond Turcotte, René Garneau, Valdombre et Lucien Parizeau la dette de reconnaissance que notre génération n'a pas encore payée à la mémoire d'Olivar Asselin [...]. D'abord à *L'Ordre*, puis à la *Renaissance* et, depuis sept ans, au *Canada*, il n'a cessé de lutter contre l'obscurantisme, la réaction et la médiocrité. Toujours il s'est engagé à fond.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> LaPalme (1950): 15

<sup>147</sup> LaPalme (1950): 13.

LaPalme's task, however, was to find the context in which this engagement could best take shape. Even as Jean-Louis Gagnon penned this assessment, LaPalme was already active with *Le Devoir's* director, Gérard Filion, in illustrating the compendium of Filion's satires printed under the name of La Rabastalière which would be published in late 1950 as ... *Denrées périssables*. This project was a dress-rehearsal for his departure from *Le Canada* two months later.

## Chapter Five

### Dark comedy : Robert LaPalme's Maurice Duplessis, 1944-1959

“Ce ne sont pas des bandes dessinées que je déroule ici. L’aspect préhistorique et comique qui saute aux yeux de la génération actuelle pourrait fort bien, je l’admets, inspirer Astérix ou Lil Abner; il n’y avait rien de drôle à la vivre.”

Former Liberal leader Georges-Émile Lapalme writing about the Duplessis era, 1967 <sup>1</sup>

“Ce que nous voulons, ce n’est pas la disparition du parti libéral, c’est celle de l’opposition.”  
Maurice Duplessis, 1952 <sup>2</sup>

#### 1. The Duplessis régime

How could Robert LaPalme have foretold, in his 1943-44 caricatures for *Le Canada*, that Maurice Duplessis would so dominate his work for so many years? To do so would have been to understand in advance the veritable national myth that Duplessis became, and that Québec perhaps required. From his re-election on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1944 until his death at Schefferville, in the Ungava region of Québec, on September 7<sup>th</sup> 1959, Maurice Duplessis left indelible traces on provincial life and in the popular imagination. His actions, his speeches, his comportment and appearance all combined to exemplify his single-minded grasp, his virtuoso manipulation of political power. Robert LaPalme redeployed the figure of Maurice Duplessis into the realm of Québec’s visual information culture, making a para-Duplessis visible in mocking counterpoint to the celebrated Chef, “qui donna à sa province” through four successive terms in office. LaPalme used the skills he

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<sup>1</sup> Georges-Émile Lapalme, *Le vent de l’oubli. Mémoires, tome II* (Montréal, Lémac 1970) : 205.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.: 108.

had honed through his 1930s celebrity caricature and through his daily political satires for *L'Action catholique* and *Le Canada* between 1940 and 1944. He led an inventive campaign that ran, and ran, and ran. It was a re-reading at close hand of the breadth of Maurice Duplessis's overreaching presence in Québec's political life as it unfolded over fifteen years.

To this day, historians debate the nature of Duplessis's Union nationale régime and its function in the evolution of Québec society and politics from a basis in a liberal free-enterprise model to that of a progressive welfare state on a post-War model.<sup>3</sup> Within this debate the very historical vision of the nature of Québec's culture has been at stake. A consensus has emerged and ebbed around Duplessis. He, his party, and his government, are said to have led, in connivance with the Catholic clergy, the resistance to modernization in Québec. Yet the detailed historiographical work undertaken since his death has invalidated many of these assumptions, not least of which is one developed within the era itself. Duplessis represented a reactionary bulwark that would then yield to change, the change that was later known as the Quiet Revolution. Furthermore, the extensive study of a production such as Robert LaPalme's shows how caricature was one of many practices which helped to construct the necessary position that Duplessis had to occupy. It's as if a society in flux needed to identify, name and overcome any forces inimical to its transformation. LaPalme's caricatures discredited the ruling government of Maurice Duplessis, and made it into disloyal opposition. They helped to posit the values and aspirations of Georges-Emile Lapalme's Liberal Party and the independent

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<sup>3</sup> Gilles Bourque, Jules Duchastel and Jacques Beauchemin, *La société libérale duplessiste 1944-1960* (Montréal, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1994); Alain-G. Gagnon and Michel Sarra-Bournet, eds. *Duplessis entre la Grande Noirceur et la société libérale* (Montréal, Éditions Québec-Amérique, 1997).

newspaper *Le Devoir* as those of a government-in-waiting. In a battle of representations for the vision of Québec society, the use of the representative image of Maurice Duplessis was paramount. The breadth of Robert LaPalme's Maurice Duplessis, his premier comic invention, lay in the measure of a public figure that stretched the artist's capacity to make caricature representative of overarching psychological insights into the man and his society.

LaPalme's Duplessis evolved, darkened and emerged into sharper focus the longer he stayed in power. By repeatedly returning to specific aspects of the Duplessis persona, LaPalme consolidated his presence and reality. Over fifteen years, his Duplessis evolved from a wicked and dastardly comic political figure to a tragic, aging, and increasingly decrepit anti-god. Violent, scheming, manipulative, superstitious, LaPalme's Duplessis stalked his province, handing out orders to his henchmen. He brutalized the young women Québec and Montréal and hoodwinked the cipher Baptiste out of inheritance, education, and prospects. Election dates were decided by the magic properties of numbers. Paganism and witchcraft hovered around the figure of Duplessis, who was otherwise associated with clericalism and the hold of the Catholic Church on the province and the lives of its citizens. The single frames of LaPalme's caricatures were set in briefly- outlined offices, on city streets, in farmyards or on the hustings. In this world, the sharp-witted and punning Duplessis swashbuckled opponents and allies alike with words. In the same way, he dominated political discourse in the Québec legislature, by controlling its every utterance, often speaking for his MP's and Ministers, instructing the

Speaker on points of order and overwhelming the Liberal official opposition, never very numerous.

Like other seemingly ephemeral contemporary documents to which it is aligned (speeches, pamphlets, news items, editorials), caricature, taken as a body of work, goes some way towards reconstituting the *mentalité* of a given period. It participates in the period's visuality which, in many cases, is the vehicle for forms and subjects of expression which cannot be found elsewhere. It helps to make greater sense of other political and literary utterances. And yet a methodological and historiographical conundrum persists around the absence, in Canadian and Québec historiography, of studies of visual phenomena such as caricature, for they too were complete utterances integrated into the fabric of an era's wider textual indices. This may be because caricature, a hybrid of visual and textual forms, depends on a host of parallel references that produce meaning for the original reader which need to be painstakingly researched to be productive of that meaning later. It is also allied to oral and performative expressions which have often escaped documentation.

As we have already seen, caricature in Québec, as in other societies, was not simply illustrative of its time but was also a passage that allowed for the expression of attitudes towards political and social anxieties. These could only be articulated by "bodies on stage": through the theatre, for example, or through the highly-mobile printed caricature. Robert LaPalme's large parodic Canadian history tableau made as a stage set for Gratien Gélinas's "Histoire de faire de l'histoire" in the 1945 edition of the annual comedie-

musicale revue *Fridolinons*, reviewed in the daily Montréal press and also in *Canadian Art* magazine, conferred new status on LaPalme's work. But his caricature became an observable historical phenomenon as a body of work, reiterated over a continuous period of time, with consistency of satirical approach and attack on a single figure erected, like James Gillray's George III or Honoré Daumier's Louis Philippe, into a visual emblem, a sign denoting an entire political class, an ideology, a national world-view.

In Duplessis's case, the nature of this process was announced by former *Le Devoir* journalist Pierre Laporte's 1960 memoir *Le vrai visage de Duplessis*. Laporte opened his memoir with an assertion that the entire figure of the Chef could be reduced to the few lines required to present his nose (Figure 5-1). And yet, Québec's historiography has refused the persistence of this nose, of LaPalme's Duplessis, ubiquitous though it was in its time. In this chapter we will investigate in depth the full manifestation of Duplessis as a coherent satirical figure at the hands of Robert LaPalme. In our closing chapter, we will then consider how LaPalme's achievement holds keys to the historiographical erasure of caricature from Québec's art history.

Over the fifteen years of Duplessis's régime, LaPalme worked from three distinct bases. Following his 1943-44 caricatures, he remained at *Le Canada* until February 1951. Two months later he joined the staff of *Le Devoir* under Gérard Filion and André Laurendeau. While at *Le Devoir* until the end of January, 1959, LaPalme was also closely involved with Jacques Hébert's journal *Vrai* (1954-59). The *Le Canada* years 1944-1951 were also marked by great activity in other realms such as theatre and poster design, book

illustrations and exhibitions, as we have already seen. The final years of this tenure presented great challenges to the stability being encouraged in different ways by the Union nationale government at Québec City and the federal Liberal government at Ottawa. Through these challenges, LaPalme's own position shifted sufficiently that he eventually chose to align himself anew with provincial Liberal politics from the independent standpoint of *Le Devoir*.

## **2. From *Le Canada* to *Le Devoir*, 1944-1951**

### **2.1. Political realignments at Québec City and Ottawa**

At *Le Canada*, LaPalme continued to be officially tied to a political party, the federal Liberals (under Mackenzie King until 1948 and then under Louis Saint-Laurent). At the 1948 provincial election, *Le Canada* was as resolutely supportive of Adélard Godbout's provincial Liberals against Maurice Duplessis as it had been in 1944. But this support was a tremendous liability in a province enjoying post-war prosperity under Duplessis. He had reformed his profligate spending ways of 1936-39, had made peace with the English-Canadian financial establishment by promoting free enterprise and the investment of Anglo-American capital in the province, and easily scored points off Godbout's team for its association with the Federal "centralisers" who were moving towards social policies which made the state the guarantor of social welfare and which thereby called for a redefinition of the powers vested in the provinces and the federal government. Duplessis' first rallying cry throughout his time in power was the defence of Québec's autonomy, and this he successfully allied to the notion of French-Canadian



identity as described in laws, language and customs. The second was his unyielding opposition to communism and socialism in any form. The highest expression of this principle was expressed through his determination to make unlawful any otherwise lawful assembly of elements deemed subversive, and to this end he ruthlessly applied the 1937 Padlock Law. It provided one of the great judicial challenges of the era.<sup>4</sup>

In 1948, Duplessis secured a huge majority of the popular vote and crushed the Liberal opposition, reduced to a rump of nine MPs in the legislature. This victory appeared to exemplify a social order. The order included the Union Nationale party, Québec's legislative institutions, the growing infrastructure (with massive construction of highways, hospitals and education buildings, and the exploitation of Québec natural resources for transformation outside the province), paternalistic benevolence towards labour, and government support for the institutions and traditional aims of the Catholic Church. The strength of this alliance lay in its pyramidal structure, with an all-knowing Maurice Duplessis at the top.

This exemplary leader conveyed overwhelming force. His command of every level of the deployment of power through the state's political, judicial, social and religious institutions, appeared to be complete. Such was the measure of his strength in the collective imaginary. Through repeat victories in 1952 and 1956, the person and the personality of Maurice Duplessis came to embody the victorious social order of 1948. Conversely, this social order was perceived to the measure of person and personality. His

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<sup>4</sup> The case is discussed below, in Chapter Six, note 9.

face; his nose made immense, hooked and crooked and increasingly disarticulated; his body, portly and progressively subject to the ravages of diabetes; his demeanour and his speech, all were the stuff of LaPalme's study, a gradually perfected political portrayal that took its place alongside written records of Duplessis's attitudes, behaviour and actions. For if editorial commentary and journalistic investigation could define Duplessis's social and political comportment, Robert LaPalme could articulate the separate dimension of the visual and spatial presence of the figure in Québec life. LaPalme could reproduce the physical figure and attach to it the more evanescent satirical public knowledge of the man that was attendant on his habits, on the oral biography that circulated among journalists and politicians. Indeed, he built a satirical visual portrait in which the reformed drunk, the former womaniser became a "vieux garçon", unmarried, childless, a confirmed bachelor peripheral to the ideology of family at the core of Québec's Catholic social values. By 1949, LaPalme had effectively created a counter-Duplessis at odds with the values exemplified by the social order which his election victory apparently had made triumphant.

The same year saw the first serious challenges to and realignments of this order, from without and within. For the first time since the death of Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1919, a French-Canadian led the federal Liberal party into a general election. In Québec, Louis Saint-Laurent faced a coalition between Duplessis and federal Conservative leader George Drew.<sup>5</sup> This compact duly elicited ferocious portrayals of Duplessis, Drew,

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<sup>5</sup> George Drew (1894-1973) had been leader of the Ontario Conservatives and Premier of Ontario, 1943-1948, when he succeeded John Bracken as head of the federal Conservative party. He shared with Maurice Duplessis an unshakeable belief in the importance of provincial rights, exemplified at the Provincial premiers' conference of 1946. Details of the collaboration between Drew's Conservatives, the Québec

Montréal mayor and Conservative candidate Camilien Houde and the UN apologists Robert Rumilly and the erstwhile editor of the fascist *La Nation*, Paul Bouchard.<sup>6</sup> All were denigrated by LaPalme during the campaign. And yet Saint-Laurent's victory, although depicted as humiliating to Duplessis in *Le Canada*, led to newly cordial relations between Québec City and Ottawa. While *Le Canada* continued to trumpet the achievements of the federal Liberal party and its leader, it was gradually losing its *raison-d'être* as an effective opponent to *Duplessisme* because the ties between the federal and Québec wings were gradually weakened. From early 1949 onwards, the mantle of opposition passed to *Le Devoir*, which had cautiously supported Duplessis in the 1948 election on the grounds of his defence of provincial autonomy. But its position shifted dramatically in its 1948-1949 investigation of the deplorable working conditions at Asbestos and with its coverage of and support for the ensuing strike, later seen as a defining point in the evolution of Québec society.

In 1950, LaPalme signalled an imminent shift by contributing illustrations to a collection of pseudo-fable columns entitled...*Denrées périssables*. These had appeared in *Le Devoir* under the pseudonym La Rabastalière, *nom de plume* of *Devoir* editor in chief Gérard Filion.<sup>7</sup> *Le Devoir* was in the early years of a new phase. It was reinvigorated in 1947 with the arrival of Filion, who soon persuaded André Laurendeau, leader of the *Bloc*

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provincial wing of the Conservative Party and the Union Nationale during the 1949 election campaign will be found in Dale C. Thomson, *Louis Saint Laurent: Canadian* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1967): 269-271, and Conrad Black, *Duplessis* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1977): 456-460.

<sup>6</sup> For Paul Bouchard, see Jean Côté, Paul Bouchard, *Flamboyante figure de notre époque* (np., [Québec] n.d. [1998]).

<sup>7</sup> *La Rabastalière* (Gérard Filion, pseud.) ...*Denrée périssables*. Montréal, L'Action nationale, 1950.

*national* and editor of *L'Action nationale*, to join him.<sup>8</sup> Laurendeau, conceding the impossible task facing the four-man Bloc caucus before the might of Duplessis in the National Assembly, transferred his hard-learned grassroots political skills to the reflective and often darkly humorous social, political and cultural critique which distinguished his editorials at *Le Devoir* from 1947 onwards. This critique harmonized with Filion's own hard-headed and yet often equally wry approach exemplified by ...*Denrées périssables*. Published by *L'Action nationale* at *Le Devoir*'s print works, this little volume appeared just in time for Christmas 1950.<sup>9</sup> On February 20 1951, *Le Canada* published its last political caricature by LaPalme, who became *Le Devoir*'s first regular caricaturist on April 16, 1951. *Le Canada* thereafter shrank in importance for the Liberal Party, increasingly anxious to jettison a money-losing business. It finally closed on November 17, 1953.

While *Le Devoir* fought then and later through many difficult financial periods, it retained an independence that gave it a strategic credibility, through its journalistic rigour and the wide ranging cultural interests which echoed those of a society demanding improved education. This credibility may have been strengthened by LaPalme's visual editorials which, by any measure, must be accounted as outlandish and extreme. If they were the very antithesis of the rest of *Le Devoir*'s content, they also completed the paper's representation of otherwise tacit attitudes towards the Duplessis régime. This

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<sup>8</sup> Denis Monière, *André Laurendeau et le destin d'un peuple* (Montréal: Québec-Amérique, 1983); Donald J. Horton, *André Laurendeau, French-Canadian Nationalist 1912-1968* (Toronto: Oxford University Press); Robert Comeau and Luc Desrochers, eds., *Le Devoir : Un journal indépendant (1910-1995)* (Sainte-Foy : Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1996); Robert Comeau and Lucille Beaudry, eds., *André Laurendeau. Un intellectuel d'ici* (Sillery: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> The book is discussed in full below, section 3.1.3.

integration of more extreme speech into an environment that otherwise depended on its objective integrity was at odds with the more avowedly party-political journalism of *Le Canada*. It recalled the tactics of its opponent, the Union Nationale-funded *Le Temps* or other precursors such as the unioniste-era *Événement-Journal* of 1938-39. LaPalme nonetheless imposed himself as a leading caricaturist in his *Le Canada* years, rivalling his hero David Low in the esteem of fellow journalists. Indeed, a study of the overall range of LaPalme's career in these years shows it to be in a straight line from the immersion in the Liberal world of the prosecution of the Second World War, the world which helped define Canada's cultural and economic expansion after 1945.

## **2.2. Québec identity in question**

LaPalme's close association with *Le Devoir's* editorialists emerges out of two distinct events that were foundational for the critiques which would cross the 1949-1959 era. If the *Le Devoir* editorials are read in the light of the corresponding caricatures contributed by LaPalme to *Le Canada*, we find important signals of the graphic approaches that would mark the LaPalme era at *Le Devoir*.

### **2.2.1. The cession of Ungava mining interests**

Shortly after the 1948 election, the government ceded control of the immense Ungava territory in northern Québec to the American Hollinger group, later to be known as Iron Ore Co. The settlement originated in developments dating back to 1942, in co-operation

between the then Liberal administrations at both Ottawa and Québec City, when it was essential for iron ore reserves to be made available to the American war effort. The terms of the 1948 contract renewal provided for Hollinger to bear the costs of investing hundreds of millions in the infrastructure required to extract and transport the mineral to the United States, in return for a royalty of \$100,000 a year, equivalent to one cent per tonne extracted. The effect of this decision on nationalist milieux was unequivocal: in a climate of mistrust of Anglo-American finance, the Province of Québec seemed to be honouring traditions dating from the days of the Taschereau régime. At *Le Devoir* in 1952, a caricature by Robert LaPalme neatly encapsulated the perception that Duplessis would fight a cause only to turn 180 degrees eventually, on natural resources and provincial autonomy.

### **2.2.2. The Asbestos strike of 1949 and the representation of Quebec identity**

Throughout 1948, investigations by an American Catholic journalist, Burton Le Doux, into the deplorable working conditions in the Québec Asbestos Corporation plant at East Broughton resulted in the publication of sensational reports in the *Front Ouvrier*, taken up in early 1949 by *Le Devoir*. As the workers' response evolved into a strike against the company, owned by the American firm Johns-Manville, the Union Nationale government countered with intransigent refusal to permit a strike of any kind. The bitter industrial conflict which ensued marked a watershed in the evolution of political positions opposed to the Union Nationale. *Le Devoir* through its editorials and through its resolve to send reporters to cover the incidence of asbestosis, the working conditions and the strike,

brought forward powerful *identitaire* elements which went to the centre of French-Canadian self-representation. The language was deliberately keyed very high, on an unmistakably visible level in more ways than one. In “L’argent a aussi ses camps de concentration,” *Le Devoir*’s director Gérard Filion angrily invoked both Nazi Germany and the racist oppression of black South Africans in his description of the American treatment of Québec workers. The front-page editorial is worth considering at length, for it would prove to encapsulate the political, social and identity problems around which LaPalme’s representation of Duplessis would coalesce in the next ten years:

L’enquête de M. Burton LeDoux sur les conditions de travail dans la mine et l’usine de la Québec Asbestos Corporation et sur les conditions de vie dans le village d’East Broughton est un document social et humain de première valeur. Nous en avons sollicité et autorisé la publication, parce que nous la savons véridique et d’intérêt public.

[...] L’hygiène industrielle est une question d’intérêt public. D’abord parce que la Société a le devoir de protéger ses membres contre les abus des puissants; ensuite parce que les ouvriers, dont la santé est ruinée par des conditions de travail mauvaises, tombent généralement à la charge de la Société. C’est d’ailleurs ce qui s’est produit à Saint-Rémi d’Amherst et à East Broughton : les familles d’ouvriers malades ou décédés ont été placées sur la liste de secours des ‘Mères nécessiteuses’.

J’ai moi-même visité East Broughton. J’ai visité l’usine étage par étage : j’ai vu les empocheurs et les ‘pileurs’ s’essouffler dans un nuage de poussière qu’on aurait pu couper au couteau. La description qu’en fait M. LeDoux reste en deça de la vérité. Pas un homme qui aime bien son chien ne le laisserait dans un tel lieu même pour quelques heures seulement. Forcer des hommes à travailler dans de telles conditions durant des jours, des mois, des années, c’est criminel.

Et en touchant du doigt toutes ces misères imméritées, je n’ai pu m’empêcher d’évoquer la parole du cardinal Saliège à son clergé : Il n’y a pas que le nazisme, il n’y a pas que le communisme qui aient des camps de concentration. L’argent a aussi ses camps de concentration, que sont les taudis qui menacent la vie humaine et la propagation de la vie.

Deux pays seulement fournissent presque tout l'amiante qui se consomme dans le monde : l'Afrique du Sud et le Canada. En Afrique du Sud, ce sont les Noirs des hauts plateaux du Basutoland qui fournissent la main-d'oeuvre des mines et des usines. On rapporte que la mortalité par amiantose avec ou sans complications y est effarante. Personne ne s'en inquiète, parce que la source de main-d'oeuvre est inépuisable et parce que les Sud-Africains n'ont pas la réputation d'être tendres pour leurs Noirs. Au Canada, ce sont les Canadiens français qui fournissent le bétail humain nécessaire à l'extraction de la fibre d'amiante. Le taux effarant de 391.7 de mortalité par tuberculose à Thetford comparativement à une moyenne de 70 pour la province semble bien établir que les conditions de travail ne sont guère meilleures dans la région québécoise de l'amiante qu'en Afrique du Sud, et que les Canadiens français sont les nègres de nos mines d'amiante.

La Québec Asbestos Corporation est une filiale d'une compagnie américaine, la Philip Carey Mfg Co. Il ne faudrait pas en déduire que cette compagnie est le reflet du gouvernement et du peuple américains. Certains capitalistes américains qui vont établir des industries à l'étranger se conduisent parfois comme des salauds. C'est le cas à East Broughton. Mais nous savons que la conscience du peuple américain réprouve de telles pratiques. Nous savons aussi que le gouvernement de Washington tient à ce que ses citoyens se conduisent proprement à l'étranger.

East Broughton, comme Saint-Rémi d'Amherst, pose un cas à la conscience chrétienne. Vingt siècles de christianisme n'ont pas encore réussi à déraciner du coeur humain la faim maudite de l'argent qui est à l'origine de l'exploitation de l'homme par l'homme.<sup>10</sup>

French-Canadian workers were the “niggers” of our asbestos mines. A truly Christian perspective could not countenance this abuse. The government had a duty to intervene against the exploitation of man by man, and of worker at the hands of industry. It was important to speak and make visible the misery of our citizens; it was important to say that forces were abroad that considered human life expendable because of its national or racial identity.

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<sup>10</sup> Gérard Filion, « L'argent a aussi ses camps de concentration », *Le Devoir*, 15 janvier 1949, p. 1. The Asbestos strike has been heavily mythologized in Québec historiography and we by no means seek to confirm its mythic status, but rather to investigate its underpinnings.



The comparison to South Africa was in the air. Four days later in *Le Canada*, Robert LaPalme referred to the apartheid-inspired massacres of Black South Africans by the government of South African Premier Daniel François Malan, who is shown “sowing” nationalism and racism as violence erupts around the corner (Figure 5-2). Malan had just won power in 1948 as the first Prime Minister to implement apartheid policies in South Africa. As the Asbestos strike grew in March, LaPalme pulled Duplessis into the same position, rather more joyously sowing reaction, bad faith and censorship (Figure 5-3). On February 22nd, LaPalme had compared Duplessis to Joseph Stalin, in a cartoon where Stalin is seen giving Duplessis lessons in strangling. Duplessis takes his cue for the execution of the Press from Stalin’s execution of Religion (Figure 5-4). This drawing was reprinted in the Canadian edition of *Time Magazine*, in an article (possibly written by Jean-Louis Gagnon, then *Time*’s correspondent at Montréal) celebrating LaPalme’s activities. Here, too, Duplessis’s position was part of a symbolic order which touched on the sense of identity. His alleged determination to exert strong censorship was most exemplified by the Padlock Law. LaPalme set up a wry cross-transfer in this comparison of Duplessis to Stalin, since Duplessis’s support for censorship was portrayed as part of an authoritarian vision which included a predominant role for the Church. But the Church was itself hardly a stable element at this time. *Le Devoir* alone exemplified the vigorous Catholic personalism that Laurendeau had imbued through his contact with *L’Esprit*, Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain in the 1930s. It was also promoted by Père Georges-Henri Lévesque at the École des Sciences Sociales at Université Laval. Lévesque more than once fell afoul of Duplessis. As Jean-Philippe Warren and E. Martin

Meunier have shown, this socially-engaged and laicising Catholicism actually enjoyed increasing support throughout the Church establishment in the 1950s. The spirit was already abroad in the post-war era. Duplessis's repression of the trade union movement went contrary to the beliefs and practices of clergy who believed, following *Rerum Novarum*, in the importance of the union movement to lend dignity to workers' lives. In the Asbestos strike of 1949, many parish priests led with the collection plate for the striking workers. The support given to the unions by Mgr Joseph Charbonneau would earn him, following the Union nationale's protests to the Vatican, exile to Victoria.<sup>11</sup>

In effect, the wider problem of religion and its association to identity lay with the force of habit. The long-proclaimed identification made by nationalists between the defence of language, faith, and *Patrie* had made religious control of vital social institutions such as hospitals, charities and education part and parcel of the nationalist project. For many, Duplessis's genius lay in recognizing that the nationalist card could be most powerfully played by the leader who could entirely control the manipulation and distribution of social regulation. Warren and Meunier pinpoint the moment when two opportunistic forces met:

Lorsque Maurice Duplessis s'agenouilla publiquement aux pieds du cardinal Villeneuve, lors du Congrès eucharistique national de 1938, pour lui remettre dans la main un anneau, "symbole," dit-il, "de notre attachement à l'anneau du Pêcheur qu fut un prêcheur de charité," l'union du temporel et du spirituel était scellée : le moment est historique. Duplessis a astucieusement exorcisé la méfiance que l'Église entretenait à l'égard de l'État. [...] Feignant de croire que le gouvernement catholique de Duplessis marque la victoire de la vieille utopie ultramontaine, l'Église du cardinal versera dans la complaisance et se verra par

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<sup>11</sup> Conrad Black gives an account of the Asbestos strike that roundly condemns the strikers and Mgr Charbonneau; it is nevertheless extensively documented as to the removal of Mgr Charbonneau to Victoria. Conrad Black, op. cit.: 513-539.

moment obligée d'observer un silence prudentiel et gênant, pour ne pas compromettre les acquis historiques.<sup>12</sup>

This passage echoes, sixty-five years after Lionel Groulx's disavowal, the fundamentally important truth for the satirical Duplessis developed by LaPalme between 1949 and 1959. It was above all necessary to see him as a usurper. In the usurper's world, all actions have a coherence which is fundamentally satirical with respect to the even-tempered norms of society. Cross-pollinated readings in biography and historiography bear this out. Bourque, Duchastel and Beauchemin (1994) showed that, far from being a clerico-ruralist government, Duplessis's Union nationale advanced, in its discourse, word for word and concept for concept, a programme of governance and economic development entirely in keeping with the aims and aspirations of liberal democracies on a classic Western model. On the other hand the 1967 memoirs of Georges-Emile Lapalme, Québec Liberal leader from 1950 to 1958, make it clear that Maurice Duplessis's political effect was experienced in the realms of private and public representation. It demonstrated his almost transcendent personal manipulation of every single area of governance and discourse. The political model was thus rendered inherently excessive and grotesque through the extraordinary ability of the leader to fuse with the entire political fabric. Since this fabric included the cultural, the national, the spiritual as well as the electoral and economic realms, Duplessis was everywhere and became the representation of excess. LaPalme's caricatures take their coherence, across thematic strands and across time, from the persistence of this representation.

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<sup>12</sup> E.-Martin Meunier and Jean-Philippe Warren, *Sortir de la « Grande noirceur ». L'horizon « personnaliste » de la Révolution tranquille* (Sillery, Québec, 2002) : p 188, note 50.

While we have already seen that LaPalme was engaged with Duplessis from 1943, the divisive events of winter and spring 1949 and the Asbestos strike were definitively associated to the utter mastery of the Québec legislature Duplessis enjoyed after his 1948 election victory. He began to truly rule Québec in his own image. With his support of the Conservatives in the 1949 election, forces began to unite against Duplessis the usurper. LaPalme's caricatures of Duplessis reached peaks of invective around such elections. In 1949, *Le Canada* supported its masters, Louis Saint-Laurent's Liberals, and identified a coalition between the Union nationale, the Conservatives and a number of fascist elements as its opponents. The Asbestos strike took place against the background of this coalition's preparations, and was harnessed by *Le Canada* to campaign ends. LaPalme drew just four caricatures with respect to the crisis, three of which touched on gender or family relations. On March 23, 1949, Labour Minister Antonio Barrette asks a pretty Union girl to dance, but she "knows the end of the song" – that he will take advantage of her (Figure 5-5). Two days later, the US-based president of the Johns-Manville firm has no time to take care of the strike because he is too busy dealing with a picket line formed of his ex-wives (Figure 5-6). More closely aligned to Filion's assertion about "Mères nécessiteuses", an April 20 drawing shows a destitute family unable to eat until the strike is settled at Duplessis's and Barrette's behest (Figure 5-7).

### **2.2.3. Fascist shadows and "nègres blancs"**

Finally, on May 10<sup>th</sup> 1949, with the federal election approaching, LaPalme directly identified Duplessis's role in the Asbestos strike with the Conservative Party. A fire screen in a theatre burns. "Asbestos – lois ouvrières du gouvernement conservateur Duplessis-Barrette." (Figure 5-8) The association was made symbolically explicit by recourse to cultural-racial borrowing when, on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, a totem pole posted Conservative leader George Drew, atop padlock-clad Maurice Duplessis, himself atop Camilien Houde, atop fascist leader Adrien Arcand (Figure 5-9). Both Houde and Arcand had been interned during the Second World War, Houde for openly calling on Montreal's young men not to register for conscription, and Arcand for his avowed fascist activities. The invocation of fascism came also through the depiction of historian Robert Rumilly as a rat biting the federal government hand that feeds it, on June 11<sup>th</sup> (Figure 5-10). Rumilly had spoken out in favour of the Pétainist judge Bernonville, hired in Québec in 1948, and would more than once refer to the Second World War as a "sale guerre". On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, Rumilly was shown in a "See no evil" sequence with Jacques Sauriol and Paul Bouchard, a triumvirate in fascist salutes denigrating English Canadian soldiers, as three George Drews enact the traditional monkey actions (Figure 5-11). Finally, on the eve of the election, the spirit of a dead Canadian soldier finds Sauriol, Rumilly, Drew and Bouchard all in bed together (Figure 5-12).

Identity attacks on national feeling through allusion to soldiering had a long pedigree in Québec caricature, dating back at least to Henri Julien's depiction of the Liberal minister for militia in 1899 as one of the blackface minstrel *By-Town Coons*. In the American coon show tradition, the reference to unworthy soldiering – another aspect of the

discourse of the usurper – was a familiar method used to ridicule African-American pretensions to full citizenship, despite the distinguished record of African-American regiments in the Civil War.<sup>13</sup> The conscription crisis had left this issue intensely sensitive in Québec, as Gratien Gélinas' *Tit-Coq* had reminded audiences since 1948. As we have seen, the matter of military prowess went to the heart of both English and French Canadian national mythologies at the basis of Gélinas and LaPalme's "Histoire de faire de l'histoire." There was more to come in this respect: in 1951, Defence Minister Brooke Claxton resisted appeals to make Canada's armed forces bilingual. *Le Devoir* responded with scathing attacks, not least in LaPalme's June 14 caricature, *Dans "Notre" Armée* (Figure 5-13). While a US official has his boots polished by an African-American private, Claxton claims: "The trouble here, in Canada, is that our coloured people are white!" From this worldview developed at both *Le Canada* and *Le Devoir*, the French-Canadian is destined to take on the bitter opprobrium of the slogan "White nigger", doubly ironic as an English term used in a caricature published in the Université de Montréal student newspaper *Quartier libre* in 1959 (Figure 5-14). The "nègres blancs d'amérique" proclaimed by Pierre Vallières in 1968 is not far beyond. Yet in the end, the problems of French-Canadian representation in the national armed forces of Canada were poignant, since military matters were precisely excluded from areas of provincial responsibility where *Le Devoir* located the site of French-Canadian identity. Ironically, in the matter of the fate and aspirations of French-Canadian workers in companies owned by US interests, the label fit all too easily into the provincial jurisdiction over industrial development and mineral resources – as a marker of "national" representation.

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<sup>13</sup> Robert C. Toll, *Blackening Up. The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth Century America* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1974).

Around the core matters of the transformation of Québec's economy, its education system and social support structures, the political battles of the 1950s were articulated through a depiction of the consequences for identity, made manifest in visual realisation and argumentation. Here, a powerful coalition set to work.

### **3. At *Le Devoir*, 1951-1959**

#### **3.1. Caricature, journalism and party politics**

##### **3.1.1. A new Liberal Party for Robert LaPalme**

Georges-Émile Lapalme, leader of the Liberal Party of Québec from 1950 to 1958, has left us an indelible portrayal of Maurice Duplessis at the height of power.

Quand il évoquait l'inexistant comme "le crucifiement de la province sur une croix d'or" ou "l'air pur des grands horizons", il surélevait le plateau des offrandes de façon à ce qu'on ne vit pas qu'il ne contenait rien, mais il faisait passer le mirage qui personnifiait l'inconnu d'un avenir impensable. Il faut l'avoir vu et entendu sur le parquet de l'Assemblée pour saisir la portée de l'ascendant qu'il exerça si longtemps : dans un français qui descendait vers le terroir pour y trouver les mots utilisés dans toutes les cuisines du Québec, il récupérait le butin de la province sans dire ce qu'il serait et, dans l'énumération des cataplasmes dont se composait sa politique, il faisait passer la croyance au miracle. De haut des galeries auxquelles il s'adressait surtout tombait une bénédiction collective distribuée par des porteurs de soutanes noires et de ceinturons violets, frères, abbés, curés, chanoines et monseigneurs. La séance terminée, tous descendaient dans l'arène pour le féliciter. J'en ai vu qui pleuraient, j'ai vu un prélat domestique oublier toute dignité et lui baiser les mains.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Georges-Émile Lapalme. *Le vent de l'oubli (mémoires, tome 2)* (Montréal: Léméac, 1970) [hereafter *Le vent de l'oubli*]: 40-41.

Georges-Emile Lapalme's tenure as head of the Quebec Liberal Party made him a privileged witness to Maurice Duplessis from the standpoint of opposition which, in this decade, attained a new polemical intensity which bore at its heart the very nature of French-Canadian identity.

At a distance of more than sixty years, Duplessis and his opponents often appear to be at war through personality first and foremost, and only then over positions which were, to some degree, in fact already agreed. Each side outdid the other in representing its opponent as the true traitor to Québec. We remember that Maurice Duplessis won the election of 1944 largely by winning the argument that Adelard Godbout had sold Québec's interests to Ottawa in wartime. He was re-elected with a tremendous majority in 1948 by successfully portraying Godbout, once again, as the man who would sell out Québec. He also represented Québec as a bulwark against the spread of communism. In 1948, the Cold War was in its initial phase, and Canada had itself been rocked by a scandal involving Soviet spies. Duplessis was sincerely faithful to the reactionary cause that equated communism with mortal attacks on the order uniting family, homeland and faith. It was precisely around the idea of "selling out" that the Liberals, under their new leader Georges-Emile Lapalme, would assail Duplessis and the Union nationale, both in their agreements with Anglo-American finance and, after 1951, in their increasingly cosy relationship with Louis Saint-Laurent and the federal Liberal Party. The Liberals, centrist by tradition, were easily portrayed as left-wing and susceptible to communist sympathies, partly because in their administration of the war they had sought to promote Canadian-



Soviet friendship once the Soviet Union had become a war ally. For all these reasons, one of the most important political developments for the history of Québec after 1948 lay in the gradual separation of the Québec Liberal party from its federal “parent”. This emancipation eventually allowed it, too, to play the card of autonomy and reorient its social policy to a centrist-left position in keeping with the postwar development of welfare state policies in Western democracies. Provincial autonomy and the cultural assertion of the existence of a Québec state, a Quebec worldview, were at the inalterable centre of all identity politics in this era.

The foremost arena for the representation of these positions and for the play between policy and personality was the press. With *Le Canada* and more importantly *Le Devoir* in the anti-Duplessis camp after the Godbout years were over, Robert LaPalme’s caricature, insofar as it could be closely involved with the physical representation of Maurice Duplessis, came to satirize the representation of this Québec state, imaginary or no.

The fusion of policy and personality was founded first of all in the political information culture which bore witness to Maurice Duplessis in the legislature, on the hustings and, from time to time, in private. Out of the force of his speech, his deportment and his mannerisms came the fabric of character and psychology and, ultimately, the visual representation of him in photographs, newsreels and, above all and most insistently, in caricature. The second basis of this fusion was, inevitably, the record of decisions and actions with which Maurice Duplessis, his administration and his party – the man and the two layers of infrastructure are key elements – carried out his policy. The irrefutable

victory of 1948, as we have seen, was swiftly followed by events which showed the uses to which Duplessis would put his overwhelming majority.

### 3.1.2. To *Le Devoir*

C'est au *Devoir* que j'ai commencé à prendre conscience de ce privilège dont jouissent les caricaturistes dans un journal. Au *Devoir*, je me suis beaucoup amusé. La direction ne m'a jamais refusé un dessin. J'étais très bien traité. J'adorais André Laurendeau. Il était alors éditorialiste. Cet homme d'une grande douceur était la civilité même. Il me recevait dans son bureau comme si j'avais été un cardinal. Il avait de l'attention pour les gens. En sa présence, on avait toujours l'impression de dire quelque chose d'interessant. C'était un homme charmant. J'ai gardé de lui un souvenir ému.<sup>15</sup>

In 1943 and 1944, LaPalme had easily associated *Le Devoir* with the ridicule he heaped on Bloc populaire leader André Laurendeau, then pictured as an effeminate, homosexual cross-dressing Spanish dancer in league with Maurice Duplessis. Aside from Lionel Groulx's "Notre maître le passé," the document most likely to be found near Laurendeau was *Le Bavoir* – the spittoon. Omer Héroux, *Le Grincheux*, had taken LaPalme to task. The paper had indeed solidly supported the Bloc populaire, a support which brought with it the trails of Pétainist and anti-semitic sympathies which, as we have seen, have marked its historiographical record.

After 1944, the newspaper was rudderless, its director Georges Pelletier in terminal decline, with the elderly Omer Héroux holding the fort. The newspaper founded by Henri

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<sup>15</sup> LaPalme (1997): 46-47.

Bourassa in 1910 as an independent, nationalist, Catholic voice faced acute problems of succession. Léopold Richer, transplanted from the defunct *Bloc* newspaper, led a movement to have the board of directors staffed with nominees sympathetic to Maurice Duplessis, as a prelude to turning the paper into the Union nationale's Montréal voice. Yet the mandate of the board of directors, led by young lawyer Jacques Perreault, a Bloc veteran and André Laurendeau's brother-in-law, stressed the preservation of the independent, Catholic and nationalist character of the paper. It must not fall into institutional hands.

Indeed, although Henri Bourassa himself had been a staunch champion of robust traditional clerical values, he had organized the paper's governance so that its autonomy, even from Church influence, would be strictly maintained. In the spring of 1947, Perreault and the board met to choose a successor to Pelletier, one who would help defend this autonomy.

They turned to Gérard Filion. A graduate of the École des hautes études commerciales (1934), he was editor in 1935-37 of *La Terre de chez nous*, the weekly newspaper of the Union catholique des cultivateurs (UCC) whose readership rose, during his tenure, from 14,000 to 80,000 strong. He was subsequently the UCC's Secretary-General (1937-1947), and founder-director of its insurance programme in 1944-1947. He had served on the board of directors of the Ligue pour la défense du Canada from its inception in 1942.

When Filion accepted the directorship of *Le Devoir*, he immediately invited André Laurendeau to join as assistant to Editor-in-Chief Omer Héroux. Filion and Laurendeau had known one another for fifteen years, since both had been fervent participants in the nascent Jeune-Canada movement, for whose success they had prayed together at Notre-Dame basilica.<sup>16</sup> Laurendeau, a close admirer of Lionel Groulx, had been active as director of *L'Action nationale*. This monthly had been founded in 1933 by a group that included Laurendeau's father, the music critic Arthur Laurendeau, in the wake of the 1932 fervour which saw so many nationalist youth movements spring to life around the leadership of Groulx. But Laurendeau's spiritual path was unique, for he spent the years 1935-37 in France, meeting Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain and falling in with the left-catholic personnalist milieu around the periodicals *L'Esprit* and *Sept*. His nationalist politics were transformed into a critique of Québec's social institutions that championed the lay involvement in institutions previously dominated by the Church: hospitals, education, charitable organizations and unions. He believed that Québec's nationalist aspirations could best be served by lay control of education, coupled with his fervent advocacy of francophone identity in Canada. His outstanding gifts as a writer made Laurendeau the heir to Olivar Asselin. At the side of Filion, equally vigorous as a Catholic who believed in the declericalisation of Québec's institutions, Laurendeau could develop his ideas consistently as an editorial writer in ways that were effectively wider-reaching than as the bereft leader of a small parliamentary caucus at Québec City opposite the overweening Maurice Duplessis. Finally, Laurendeau pursued his critical stance with the deeply private knowledge of his own loss of faith, kept secret from

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<sup>16</sup> Donald J. Horton. *André Laurendeau, French-Canadian Nationalist 1912-1968* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992) [hereafter Horton]: 137.

family, friends, colleagues and the public until the 1960s. His was an unbeliever's admiration for the potential of a socially-engaged, personalist Catholicism. His unique position allowed him to postulate, recognize and address directly the irrationality which he believed underlay the indissociability of Church and State as represented by Union nationale discourse.

Filion's and Laurendeau's religious positions would thus prove of utmost significance as a moment in the revival of a specific model of Catholic journalism in Québec. Together, they represented within *Le Devoir* the coming break in Québec society, its secularization and loss of faith; the fundamental transformation of its identity. The religious question also permeated the very circumstances of their arrival. The controlling shares in the trust that operated *Le Devoir* were meant to be held by the Director, a lay Catholic. To outmanoeuvre the Duplessis faction, the ailing Georges Pelletier was persuaded by Perrault to sign his shares over to Mgr Joseph Charbonneau. This strategic ploy kept Church involvement strictly limited to a question of ownership; the newspaper was to be operated, as it had been under Bourassa and Pelletier, as a lay Catholic publication. The distinction had been, for Bourassa, an important thread to the independence of the lay and combative pro-Catholic press of nineteenth century France. Effectively, the arrival of Filion and Laurendeau rekindled a tradition which had been best exemplified first by Bourassa at the time of *Le Devoir*'s foundation, and then in 1934 by the legendary Olivar Asselin whose example Laurendeau was best placed to further. As they renewed the purpose of a newspaper which carried no caricatures, it is hardly surprising that they would seek to accord caricature a place in its polemical thrust and parry, for such had

consistently been the strategy pursued in key newspapers connected to Asselin: *Les Débats*, *Le Nationaliste*, *Le Canada* and *L'Ordre*. Asselin's heirs – Gagnon at *L'Événement-Journal*, Edmond Turcotte at *Le Canada*, and now Filion and Laurendeau – repeatedly used the recipe Asselin had perfected, blending serious news with strong cultural coverage, well-written opinion pieces, literary and visual political satire.

Filion and Laurendeau's first editorials had another tradition to reclaim: they explicitly made the link to Henri Bourassa's tradition of an informed, active critical voice in Québec and Canadian national affairs. Their improvements in investigative and cultural reporting soon bore fruit. As early as 1948, *Le Devoir's* investigations helped launch a campaign to clear up police corruption in Montréal. It also soon began to sharply criticize the policies and actions of the Union nationale and Maurice Duplessis. Despite its cautious support of Duplessis in the 1948 provincial election, *Le Devoir* also promoted a socially-engaged, personalist-catholic involvement of government resources in the improvement of social conditions which were the leading preoccupations of the economic well-being of post-war Québec. This stance was in sharp contradistinction to the free-enterprise philosophy of the Union nationale. The out-manoeuvring of Duplessis by Perrault and the *Devoir* board was especially trenchant, since their actions resulted in the removal from the legislature of André Laurendeau, leader of the four-strong Bloc faction which shared opposition duties with Adélard Godbout's Liberals from 1944 to 1948. Laurendeau quit one arena of political opposition only to find a much more powerful base at *Le Devoir*.

### 3.1.3. ...*Denrées périssables*

Effectively, the 1950 volume ... *Denrées périssables* encapsulates Filion and Laurendeau's methodology and stands as a source book for the polemical adventures to follow throughout the 1950s and the *Devoir's* battles with the Union nationale. The collection has its origin in Filion's satirical sorties of 1949 and 1950, and reminds us that his own literary predilections place him at the source of *Le Devoir's* satirical objectives. Alongside the fierce and serious editorials of these first years, Filion frequently prepared a secondary editorial page item entitled, soberly enough, *L'Actualité*, signed by "La Rabastalière". The pseudonym was probably taken from a street name in Saint-Bruno, Québec, Filion's life-long residence (he would later be its mayor, 1960-68). These columns allowed Filion to flex his ironic muscles and review many of the issues of the day.

Filion gathered thirty of the columns together for ... *Denrées périssables*, which was published by *L'Action nationale* and printed at *Le Devoir's* presses.<sup>17</sup> Robert LaPalme, still at *Le Canada* in 1950, was invited to illustrate each column with caricature drawings

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<sup>17</sup> La Rabastalière (Gérard Filion, pseud.) ...*Denrées périssables* (Montréal: L'Action nationale, 1950) [hereafter referred to as ...*Denrées périssables*]. L'Action nationale is listed as the publisher on the frontispiece page; L'Imprimerie Populaire Ltée (the company which published *Le Devoir*) is named on the back cover. Information gathered from the original edition in the collection of the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.

which further teased out the political content of each item. Together the chosen columns present an apparently calm but often unexpectedly sharp ironical attack on the politics of the Duplessis and Saint-Laurent administrations, drawing to both the charge of inadequate governance of province and confederation. On bookstore shelves just in time for Christmas 1950, the book's immediate impact is difficult to gauge, since there was almost no press coverage.<sup>18</sup> The silence may be a measure of the book's audacity. The book deftly mixes modes and subjects of commentary. Opening with "Les appelants," a reference to decoy ducks and sounds used in hunting, the column develops the hunting theme in apparently straightforward exposition until it opens a comparison to vote-hunting and the comparative performances of provincial politics leaders Maurice Duplessis and Georges-Emile Lapalme. A column on an inept cartoon on international boundaries published in the *Montreal Herald* features a Stalin-Duplessis hybrid showing off a cube-shaped globe, and a diminutive Robert LaPalme at the drawing table (Figure 5-15). As the book progresses, a portrait of Duplessis' Union nationale is revealed. The angry face of Paul Bouchard, now UN ideologue and publicist, features surprisingly often. One of several monks in a sanctum established by Le Chef, Bouchard and his fellows dust the nose of a sculpted bust of Duplessis, repair a statue of Onésime Gagnon, or tend to an hourglass and a clock (*Le Temps*) (Figure 5-16). In "La devoirose," Bouchard brings a funnel-shaped *Le Temps* to administer choloroform to a yelping Duplessis, possibly victim of the terrible eponymous malady. Given the funnel's shape, it

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<sup>18</sup> The entry for ... *Denrées périssables* in the *Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires du Québec* (vol 3: 274-5) establishes just two articles as the totality of the book's reception: "Sous presse... Denrées périssables," in *Le Canada*, November 17<sup>th</sup> 1950; and Gilles Marcotte's chronicle, "Littérature et journalisme", *L'Action nationale*, January 1951 : 53-54. Since the first still published Robert LaPalme and the second was edited by André Laurendeau, it may be imagined that a friendly bias informed the decision to review the work, which otherwise was passed over entirely by critics, as Kenneth Landry affirms in his entry for the book. Landry adds that Filion is "[A]dmirablement secondé dans sa démarche par une soixantaine de caricatures inédites du redoutable Robert LaPalme [...]"



will quite likely be a rectal administration, especially since we can just divine, beyond the standing figure of Onésime Gagnon with a hypodermic needle, that Duplessis' posterior is exposed just past the hospital gown drawn up to his waist (Figure 5-17). "La devoirose" calls to mind the interdiction on distribution of *Le Devoir* in the National Assembly, ordered by Duplessis in 1949. This ban, which extended to a prohibition placed on each Union nationale member – rather in the manner of the Index maintained on unsavoury books by the Vatican – was a response to *Le Devoir*'s already relentless attacks, particularly over the Asbestos strike and the unwillingness of the government to recognize, let alone compensate, workers suffering from asbestosis. Finally, in two columns titled "Efficiency Expert" (I and II), La Rabastalière is asked by King George VI ("Connais pas? Georges Windsor, ancien roi d'Irlande, ancien empereur des Indes. Je suis actuellement roi d'Angleterre et du Canada") to reorganize the Canadian and then the Québec governments. Each minister named by La Rabastalière is assigned a new, ironic posting, with thumbnail caricatures by LaPalme. When he passes to the Québec reorganization, his first step is to create a "ministère de la Vénération universelle".

Il s'emploiera à répandre le culte du Cheuf dans la population au moyen d'images, de bustes, de cartons d'allumettes et de calendriers. Il créera un Ordre du Cheuf avec chevaliers et commandeurs. Il organisera des concours littéraires, scientifiques en vue d'honorer le Cheuf dans sa personne et dans sa doctrine. Le ministre qui en aura la direction prendra le titre de Chancelier du Chiqué. Titulaire: Paul Bouchard.<sup>19</sup>

After this neat pun on the title of Great Britain's finance minister ("Chancellor of the Exchequer"), other ministers are proposed: for Modestie (Antoine Rivard, who had notoriously proclaimed in 1942 that the granting of free universal education would be a

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<sup>19</sup> ... *Denrées périssables*: 61-62.

betrayal of Québec's ancestors), for Calembours (puns; replacing the Ministry of Education), for Deficits (instead of the Treasury) and for the Caisse électorale. The Minister for Strikes will also lead the national institute for Silicosis; there will be an Institut national de recherches sur la matraque. Finally, the Minister for Elections will be abolished in favour of a Minister for Hold-ups.

The witty capsule paragraphs allow us to appreciate how quickly *Le Devoir* was able to transfer the basis of political critique onto the behaviour and personalities of Duplessis and his ministers. By 1950, the team in power for the past six years had become a repertory troupe of actors and characters, familiar to an audience which also delighted in following the adventures of the parodic version of the same team. LaPalme's spot illustrations, roughly the same scale as these paragraphs, functioned as visual indices in which the original referent was replaced by its textual, parodic version, since LaPalme's drawing must simply be true to the text it illustrates. Its truth to the likeness of its model is already a given, since LaPalme brought the reputation of creator of virtuoso likenesses with him.

The book's layout does make some distinction in the hierarchy of its images, and these distinctions repay attention. We have already seen the monastery interior, its denizens carefully cleaning the representation of Duplessis, and the prophylactic rescue of Duplessis by Bouchard. These two twin-page illustrations are among a total of eight, dealing with quite different topics: colonization (Figure 5-18); "Le pont de l'immortalité" (Duplessis and his ministers on parade across the Pont Duplessis, which would suffer a

collapse barely two months later) (Figure 5-19); “Le bonheur, voilà l’ennemi (the virtues as steps leading to a celestial gate defended by angels, “entrée interdite aux historiens”); “Denrées périssables,” a meditation on the ephemerality of newspapers (a man heads out to the privy at night with *La Presse*, perhaps to use for reading) (Figure 5-20). In “Ça doit être embêtant d’être Dieu”, a white-bearded figure clad in a cloak of stars (a cloak used in the “Medicine through the Ages” series and, in 1952 and 1956, on Duplessis the numerancer), handling all the paperwork from Earth (Figure 5-21). “Les sigles du Chef” features Duplessis, ministers and policemen making up the letters U.N. (Figure 5-22). The text explains that acronyms have shifted their reference: whereas OTJ, for example, once meant l’Oeuvre des Terrains de Jeux, it now means *Ordre, Travail, Justice* – the motto of the party newspaper, terribly close to the Pétainist *Famille, Patrie, Travail*.

The critique of American exploitation of Canada’s natural resources found an echo in the eighth of these twin-page illustrations, for the column “Les nègres de qualité”.<sup>20</sup> It begins with what reads like a simple reportage.

Au temps où l’esclavage florissait aux Etats-Unis, il y avait chez nos voisins ce qu’ on appelait des nègres de qualité. C’étaient des esclaves comme les autres, mais des esclaves d’un ordre supérieur. Ils remplissaient des fonctions de contremaîtres, d’intendants, d’économes. Ils occupaient des postes de confiance, jouissaient d’une autorité très grande sur les autres esclaves : bref, ils représentaient l’aristocratie de l’esclavage.

Slavery was comfort; liberty would bring perilous self-sufficiency. Hence, the “nègres de qualité” fought alongside their masters in the Civil War, to maintain the established order.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid: 66-70.

Dans la politique canadienne, il y a, comme autrefois dans les États du Sud, des nègres de qualité. Ce sont des gens bien en place, que la politique impériale a favorisés et pour qui l'allégeance à une souveraineté étrangère représente le bon ordre.

Le plus connu de ces nègres de qualité est l'esclave Louis. Il est surintendant des plantations canadiennes. Il règne en maître sur un immense troupeau d'esclaves. [...] L'esclave Louis, nègre de qualité par la volonté de son seigneur, est pour le respect de l'autorité et de l'ordre établi. Parler de l'abolition de l'esclavage est pour lui une proposition révolutionnaire. [...] les pauvres malheureux qui ne désirent pas la liberté parce que, ne la connaissant pas ils la redoutent, se battront sous sa bannière contre l'abolition de l'esclavage.

In Robert LaPalme's accompanying illustration, Louis Saint-Laurent strides before us in the foreground, holding aloft a platter with bottle and , presumably, a mint julep (the glass is adorned with a mint leaf) (Figure 5-23). The intended recipient, King George VI, sits on a lawn chair in the distance. The graphic strategy is not completely successful. LaPalme's drawing has been reversed-out, making all of his black lines white, against a black background. This alone confers the idea of *négritude* onto Louis Saint-Laurent. Yet it also affects the figure of King George, perhaps invalidating the intended allusion. If anything, this confusion may attest to the difficult task of entirely transforming a French-Canadian political figure into a black man, despite the polemical intent supporting the image. In 1899, Henri Julien's celebrated caricatures of the first of Canada's francophone prime ministers, Wilfrid Laurier, in black-face, emphasized the burlesque use of makeup at the expense of the denigration intended by the caricatures' subtexts (Figure 5-24). In 1950, the rhetoric of association between French-Canadian and the African slave or quasi-slave identities is being freshly minted. As we've seen, *Le Devoir* had already compared French-Canadian workers to South African Blacks in 1949; it would come to assert that, for English Canada at least, "our coloured people are white" in 1951. But LaPalme's caricature will not confer blackness directly onto a white figure; even graphic

reversal is left slightly subverted. The image of Louis Saint-Laurent is nevertheless as close as he gets. Filion's repeated use of the term "l'esclave Louis" also closely echoes the alliteration made popular in the 1949 election campaign, "L'oncle Louis", earned as the senior politician, in his first national campaign, found his easiest moments – belying the fear that he would appear to be stern and stiff – in campaign stops which involved talking to children. In the context of LaPalme's caricature of l'esclave Louis, then, "L'esclave" slips to "L'oncle" and then to its English counterpart. Rather, not "The Uncle" but simple "Uncle". This brings the final echo of Uncle Tom. The reference to the eponymous hero of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* signals this book's tremendous contemporary popularity in nineteenth-century Québec, no less than the rest of North America. It had been rapidly translated into caricature, not least to describe French Canadian politicians in English-language newspapers, as another example from 1899 shows (Racey 1899, Figure 5-25).

Lapalme's reversing out of the lines in this drawing also draws attention to the lyrical quality of his graphic style, a quality which permeates the illustrations throughout this book and unites his caricatural and illustrative approaches. Lapalme's repertoire of undulating, tapering and broadening lines, sometimes applied in rhythmic, repetitive sequences, sometimes articulating sinuous lengths bent and shaped around described masses, is indicative of both flowing brush and modulated, broad-nibbed calligraphic dipping pens. In all, this drawing sums up his capacity to render likeness, body, space, character and movement through the briefest enunciation of symbolic elements. We have seen this approach throughout our survey of his caricatures, from the rather more precise

geometric celebrity caricatures of the 1930s through the more flowing but compact, sometimes hemmed-in drawings of *L'Action catholique* and the first year of *Le Canada*. The 1944 figures of Duplessis and Laurendeau had teased out a more extravagant use of LaPalme's mature, sensuous style, and this extravagance had reached its full expression in the mural gouache approach of the "Histoire de faire de l'histoire" stage set and the war and medicine history cycles. In particular, these cycles allowed him to turn the colour brush stroke into an undulating shape, both sharply-outlined and filled. The illustrations for ... *Denrées périssables* took on a calmer countenance than the daily caricatures in which concentric forces often kept abrupt sweeps of visual energy at work in gaining the reader's attention at the top right hand corner of the newspaper page. In his book illustrations, LaPalme's concern to integrate image with the space of text seems to allow for a quieter, though no less jocular movement.

This is effectively a humorous stateliness – an ironic, self-contradictory and self-destabilizing force. An amorous union between cherubs Maurice Duplessis and Camilien Houde provides an example (Figure 5-26). In a small flurry of stars and hearts, the naked cherubs embrace for “L’êtreinte mortelle”.<sup>21</sup> The portliness of the pink, fat cherub so familiar to generations raised on commercial prints of quasi-baroque religious imagery, is exalted in the meeting between the Premier and the Mayor. Their nudity is signalled as a near-nakedness, since Duplessis is in socks, and Houde in spats, socks and garters. The physical, nude body is, for LaPalme, never far from some indication of nakedness, voluptuousness, scrawniness, musculature or aging. The shorthand so expertly deployed, however, is attached to observation of physical specificity.

...*Denrées périssables* laid out the thematic and graphic characteristics of a decade-long programme of caricature by Robert LaPalme at *Le Devoir*. As we will see, he transferred a rollicking visual redeployment of Maurice Duplessis to a series of repeating fictional guises along lines developed over seven years at *Le Canada*. *Le Devoir* afforded a party-political autonomy that introduced new liberties into LaPalme’s attack. In 1951-1952 the newspaper appeared to seek to redress the mistake of its support for Duplessis in 1948. LaPalme’s Duplessis follows on with the outlandish fictitious adventures which parallel the misuse of power *Le Devoir* saw in the Chef’s personality and policies. But all the rhetorical resources of *Le Devoir*’s writers and caricaturist could not help the refocused Liberal Party regain power; not in 1952 nor at the subsequent election of 1956. The electoral caricatures of these two campaigns bear witness to the increasingly dystopic vision of Duplessis. LaPalme’s caricature had to accede to a far deeper psychological

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.: 51-54

tenor in order to visually materialise the anger of an apparently helpless opposition to Duplessis' régime. The 1951-52 period brought new inventiveness for LaPalme. But it was in the final years of the régime that his caricature went furthest in fulfilling the complimentary term conferred on his work by Olivar Asselin: that the victim of caricature should be a "défiguré".

### 3.2. LaPalme and Lapalme

In *Le vent de l'oubli*, George-Émile Lapalme ruefully remembered his namesake.

Tout, dans la conduite de Duplessis en Chambre, indiquait que la vie foisonnante du parti libéral alimentait ses pensées. Si, dans ses discours, je n'apparaissais que comme quantité négligeable, pourquoi ne cessait-il pas de m'attaquer en utilisant toutes les armes verbales dont il disposait? Il eut un jour un mot délicieux. Pendant une conférence de presse un journaliste lui avait posé cette question : "Que pensez-vous de Lapalme?" - "Lequel? Le caricaturiste ou la caricature?"<sup>22</sup>

The moribund, defeated Liberal Party of Québec, once the mighty party of a 39 year unbroken, seemingly dynastic rule (1897-1936), then the optimistic party of Adélard Godbout (leader from 1936 to 1949), was shattered at its 1944 and 1948 defeats. The long road back to power would take until 1960, under Jean Lesage. The party leader from 1950 to 1958, Georges-Émile Lapalme, was a former Member of Parliament at Ottawa. With the help of Jean-Marie Nadeau, whom he had defeated for the leadership, and of Jean-Louis Gagnon, Lapalme not only rebuilt the party but re-imagined its place in Québec's political firmament.

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<sup>22</sup> *Le vent de l'oubli*: 115.



On becoming leader in 1950, he organized a tour of every single provincial riding to introduce himself to the party faithful:

La monarchie de Juillet! C'est cette évocation historique qui jaillit tout naturellement du premier discours politique que je prononçai en juillet 1950, quand j'entrepris la tâche de visiter tous les comtés de la province. Un vieux texte de Tocqueville me servait de mise en scène : Tous les pouvoirs politiques, toutes les franchises, toutes les prérogatives, le gouvernement tout entier, se trouvèrent enfermés et comme entassés dans les limites d'une seule classe. Elle se logea dans toutes les places (...) et s'habitua à vivre presque autant du Trésor (c'est-à-dire de l'argent fourni par la collectivité) que de sa propre industrie.<sup>23</sup>

The evocation of this régime is historiographically precious: Lapalme conjures up the first régime associated with the birth of the newspapers *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari*, and the names of Honoré Daumier and Charles Philipon. The role of an independent newspaper alongside an unfettered clergy was certainly not lost on Lapalme, who later particularly remembered the courage of *Le Devoir* and certain of Québec's bishops in opposing the government over its handling of the Asbestos strike. He also drew the same, never-distant comparison with Occupied and Pétainist France that surfaced graphically in Robert LaPalme's 1949 federal election caricatures:

Nous disions que nous étions dans le maquis, en pays occupé. De 1944 à 1948, l'Union nationale n'avait fait que s'exercer à la puissance en attendant un lever de rideau, quoique déjà des indices plus que révélateurs eussent fait naître une prémonition de ce qui nous attendait.<sup>24</sup>

Several aspects of the alliance between *Le Devoir* and the Liberal Party would have a bearing on the satirical rhetoric maintained throughout the 1950s, informing LaPalme's caricatures at every stage. As we have seen with André Laurendeau, this partnership

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*: 16

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*: 17.

represented a generation that came of age in the late 1920s and early 1930s, having negotiated its way to a personalist world-view through the imperatives of nationalism. As personalism sought the application of the Church's work of salvation through the actions of each faithful Catholic, the personalist work in nationalism was bound to operate on a grass-roots level. It sought to bring social justice in line with a fundamentally Christian conception of the world. Laurendeau's time as a member of the Legislative Assembly had brought him into direct contact with the lived realities of French-Canadians who were being left aside. First, laissez-faire capitalism had failed them in the Depression. Then, they were left behind or compromised by the economic prosperity attendant on wartime expansion. Finally, they remained unaccounted-for when a laissez-faire climate returned under the Union nationale after 1944. The combination of nationalism and socialism had led in several European states to dictatorship. The Quebec generation of the 1920s and 1930s had passed through the temptation of messianic leaders and fascism, and had faced the grotesque exercise of authoritarianism in Maurice Duplessis. As Bourque, Duchastel and Beauchemin have argued, Duplessis sought a classic liberal free enterprise solution to the placement of Québec in the contemporary world. He did so with great authoritarianism and little consideration for notions of individual liberty. *Le Devoir* and the Liberals, on the other hand, sought out the personalist-Catholic vision of social justice that was in many respects becoming enshrined in the post-war Western welfare state. If we align our reading of LaPalme's caricatures with historiographic readings of the principal actors of 1950s Québec politics, we may understand how the processes of caricature participated in the symbolic rendering of the myths necessary to each side's worldview and actions.

### 3.2.1. Building the Duplessis myth

There is no doubt that the sense of myth was grasped at the heart of these events. In *Le vent de l'oubli*, Georges-Emile LaPalme bears close witness to the Maurice Duplessis of the years 1950-1959:

Maurice Duplessis restait l'ennemi paré de tous les défauts, celui qu'il fallait politiquement assassiner. [...] C'est en l'écoutant un soir en chambre que, froidement surpris, je sentis le passage frôlant de l'Histoire. Était-ce possible? En scrutant les galeries bondées, je m'interrogeais : Pourrons-nous jamais détruire le mythe vivant qu'il crée de rien? Il est en train d'usurper un rôle à la Mercier. Le pire, c'est qu'il réussit.<sup>25</sup>

He was impossible to “assassinate” in a régime of competing representations which were often parodic despite themselves. On January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1951, the bridge spanning the Rivière St.-Maurice at Trois-Rivières collapsed. Named after the Premier, who often referred to it as “aussi solide que l'Union Nationale”, the bridge gave way without warning in the middle of night, killing four motorists. No cause was ever found, although Duplessis instantly accused subversive elements, communists, of sabotaging the bridge, and the Liberals of having allowed communists to circulate freely in Québec in the time of Godbout's government. Georges-Emile Lapalme could be forgiven for thinking that the symbolic blow to Duplessis would be irresistible.<sup>26</sup> But less than a month later, Prime Minister Louis Saint-Laurent, in a speech in the House of Commons, allowed that the deal reached by Duplessis's administration with respect to the Ungava territory in 1948

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<sup>25</sup> Much closer, indeed, to the psychological depth of the Chef than any other biography by virtue of their concentration on the political leader as seen from day to day. *Le vent de l'oubli*: 150.

<sup>26</sup> Lapalme's bewildered response to a situation which ought to have been turned to advantage is recounted in *Le vent de l'oubli*: 81-85.

was one of which Saint-Laurent, as a native of Québec, could be proud. The astonishment felt by Lapalme at this aside was matched only by that of Duplessis who triumphantly broadcast the dissenting approval of the federal Liberals at every opportunity. As for Gérard Filion and Robert LaPalme, at least two of the symbolic images rendered in ...*Denrées périssables* had been serendipitously activated. But any symbolic advantage gained from the tragic bridge collapse was dispelled by the symbolic blow of Saint-Laurent's apparent alignment with Duplessis.

Peu à peu, je m'étais aperçu qu'il n'y avait pas eu hallucination collective et que Maurice Duplessis avait entendu d'avance, comme s'il eut plaqué un stéthoscope, les vibrations populaires. Je le voyais développer une stature différente, enveloppée dans ce qui n'était plus que le voile diaphane d'un mythe. Il prenait corps avec un certain rêve canadien-français chargé de trop de passé, pas assez d'avenir, s'ouvrant tout à coup sur une réalité lointaine mais possible. Je le voyais autrement. Je le voyais invincible : j'ai lâché le mot qui m'explique.<sup>27</sup>

How to defeat invincibility? Politically, the solution lay in the formulation of policy. In the realm of popular understanding and the circulation of comment about Duplessis, the defeat could only be inflicted directly on the persona and the person of Duplessis. From 1951 through 1955, and especially in the 1951-52 period spent preparing for the 1952 election, Robert LaPalme restored Duplessis as a devilish marionette, exemplifying extremes of deceit and manipulation in opposition to the clear reason of *Le Devoir* and the Liberal Party's position for Québec. This was the Duplessis conjured up week by week for *Le Devoir*'s editorial page. LaPalme also participated in the new imagery of the Liberal Party.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.: 181.

### 3.2.2. Le digeste de la justice sociale (1952)

By the autumn of 1951, Lapalme, Nadeau and Gagnon understood that the only hope for the opposition to Duplessis was to forge ahead with the courage of their convictions and deliver a coherent and distinctive election platform in time for the 1952 election. Jean-Louis Gagnon, hired by Lapalme in September 1950, had already drafted a speech on the theme of “Justice Sociale.”<sup>28</sup> At this time, Lapalme asked Gagnon to see if the federal Liberals would allow the Québec wing to take over *Le Canada*. The response of the federal minister responsible, C.D. Howe, was firm. The Québec Liberals were now moving too far to the left.<sup>29</sup> Louis Saint-Laurent’s distancing from the Québec Liberals’ opposition to the Ungava deal further estranged the two parties. On April 14, 1951, André Laurendeau took up the Ungava cause in a *Devoir* editorial. Two days later, Robert LaPalme’s first caricature for *Le Devoir* appeared. And although the Québec Liberals could not take over *Le Canada* and thus have a party newspaper on the order of the Union Nationale’s *Le Temps*, they had an increasingly vocal and visual ally: a *Le Devoir* enriched by LaPalme’s presence. As we have seen, Robert LaPalme’s move towards *Le Devoir* had been signalled in 1950 with his illustrations for ... *Denrées périssables*. Once he had become Fillion and Laurendau’s colleague, LaPalme was effectively at close quarters with the Liberal team, and the recourse to his imagery increased markedly.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid: 70-71

<sup>29</sup> Jean-Louis Gagnon, *Apostasies* (vol 2): 358-359

Lapalme's memoirs are tinged with an understanding of the visual. Remembering Duplessis's sentimental radio broadcasts about the virtues of farmers, which were adorned with the sound effects of birds in nature, Lapalme mused: "C'étaient nos images d'Épinal."<sup>30</sup> In 1951, when Lapalme and his colleagues dared to dream the policies they would wish for a progressive Québec, imagined on lines of social justice, they knew that they must work out a complete picture:

Ce que je désirais, c'était une politique qui se tiendrait en un tout, chaque partie étant indissociée. Il fallait tout lier dans une interdépendance des actes à poser [...] le rêve qui accompagnait la réalité insistante, mais retardataire, me poursuivait avec des images que Jean-Louis Gagnon colorait, ce qui ne nous empêchait pas tous les deux d'être conscients que l'architecture de l'édifice ne pouvait être entièrement révélée au public.<sup>31</sup>

Lapalme's capacity to think in terms of political images had consequences for his caricaturist namesake. On February 3, 1952, he delivered a speech in which he summed up: "Être libéral, c'est être socialement juste." Jean-Marie Nadeau greeted him coming off the platform: "Félicitations! Vous venez de trouver le slogan de l'élection!" Georges Lapalme soon conceived the Liberal election pamphlet, *Le Digeste de la Justice Sociale*: "Un jour, sur du papier ministre plié de manière à imiter une brochure, j'avais fait ce que les journalistes appellent un dummy. En opposant justice et injustice, j'avais écrit un texte sous des vignettes vides que Robert LaPalme remplirait de ses caricatures. Jean-Louis Gagnon fit le reste."<sup>32</sup> Lapalme then went on the hustings with his slogan and his

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<sup>30</sup> *Le vent de l'oubli*: 117.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*: 116.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*: 119-120

brochure. In his memoir, he addressed his old friend Jean-Marie Nadeau directly and posthumously :

Vous vous rappelez cette caricature de Robert LaPalme puisque vous en aviez l'original encadré chez vous? Je parle dans une petite salle paroissiale devant des cultivateurs, et un brave paysan de maire préside derrière une petite table sur laquelle repose un verre d'eau. Vous êtes penché vers le maire, vous lui parlez à l'oreille et la légende se lit ainsi : « Ce n'est pas une politique qu'il prêche, c'est une religion ». Cette religion, c'était bien... être socialement juste. Ce fut votre slogan tiré d'un discours trop long, sans plan, dit à voix forte....<sup>33</sup>

The resulting brochure and the sadly remembered caricature form part of a circle of meaning and humour which pervaded LaPalme's caricatures of Georges-Emile Lapalme for *Le Devoir* in 1952. And although *Le Devoir* retained its independence, it did support the Liberals to the extent that the caricatures sometimes gave the impression that *Le Devoir* was , like *Le Canada* before it, a propaganda arm of the Liberal party. And yet the allusion to the "religious" tone of Lapalme's speech and political belief belie such a position.

Robert LaPalme's drawings for *Le Digeste de la justice sociale* were, in the event, fairly tame. Most were didactic, establishing in left-and-right contrasts on Injustice sociale vs. justice sociale the competing UN and Liberal positions on agriculture, natural resources, industrial accidents, health insurance, workers compensation, mothers' allowance, freedom of education and school books, public morals, youth, corruption, graft, labour relations. Above all, they exemplify his illustrator's skills. At the last page, a nervous Baptiste-figure, be-toqued, gazes worriedly at the reader above the caption: "Vous avez

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

les bleus? Votez Rouge”! Reminding readers of the Union Nationale’s Québec conservative (“bleu”, “castor”) roots, the image also resuscitates, ironically in view of the charges of communist sympathy that it would endure, the term “rouge” long associated with precisely the most progressive and anticlerical elements of the party. This was the party of the young Wilfrid Laurier, anti-confederationist; it was the party of Godfroy Langlois, progressive and anticlerical founder of *Le Canada* in 1903 and forced to leave the party under the mature, conciliatory Laurier’s orders in 1909. Georges-Émile Lapalme, Jean-Marie Nadeau and Jean-Louis Gagnon were severing the ties with the party of the later Laurier, of King and of Saint-Laurent.

### **3.2.3. Vocabularies of election: sexual and national identities and the 1952 campaign**

*L’Innocence*, the image remembered by Lapalme in conversation with the ghost of Jean-Marie Nadeau, shows the caricaturist hitting his stride, precisely because he introduces a note of insouciant self-importance to the Liberal leader, appearing to bless his audience (Figure 5-27). But it was difficult for Robert LaPalme to inject much caricatural life into Georges-Émile Lapalme’s persona. By contrast, throughout this period, he conjured up a rocambolesque Maurice Duplessis, one who malevolently outmanoeuvred the Liberal leader in every respect. Although the individual election attacks made across the Duplessis caricatures can be related to the developing election campaign, their interest also lies in the balance between the satiric vocabularies they use. LaPalme repeatedly ridiculed the Union nationale caisse électorale and pictured Duplessis sweeping scandals



away; the scandals were more interesting for the visual quality of their refuse, and the figure of Duplessis because of the complex identity connotations (both ethnic and sexual) that he brought to the campaign with his fictitious behaviour, his speech, his body – indeed, his nose.

The Liberal leader, on the other hand, gave LaPalme little to work with. On March 26<sup>th</sup> 1952, mechanic Lapalme checks out out André Laurendeau's "autonomie" car. He tut-tuts the work of the Duplessis garage in (what had yet to be christened by Laurendeau as) a joul voice (Figure 5-28): "Le garage Duplessis vous la poque alrêt". On April 5<sup>th</sup>, "Toréador" Lapalme prepares to woo the nationalist vote (Figure 5-29). On the 19<sup>th</sup>, "Léonardo" Jean-Marie Nadeau (who, scowling, seems more a figure of fun than his leader) repaints Lapalme's portrait to give it a (Mona Lisa) smile (Figure 5-30). On May 17<sup>th</sup>, "St George" has to keep his Liberal Party horse from being seduced by the Duplessis dragon's wheat (Figure 5-31), and on June 7<sup>th</sup>, Father Christmas Lapalme has all the good presents (from the *Digeste*), but one is falling away (Figure 5-32). Finally, admitting that the Liberals are hopelessly outspent by the Union nationale, Lapalme walks among Duplessis's giant billboards with his sandwich board for Justice Sociale. LaPalme quotes the slogan from his final illustration for *Le Digeste*... "vous avez les bleus? Votez Rouge!"

The mighty Union nationale caisse électorale had an enormous budget which the government kept financed out of percentages skimmed from almost every contract it awarded. Duplessis was quite shameless about owning up to the practice and cared even

less for criticism that lucrative government contracts were always awarded to the Union nationale's friends. The 1952 campaign resulted in another majority for Duplessis. Although early polls had predicted a sweeping win for the Liberals, the lead was soft; they took twenty-two ridings, up from the 1948 total of nine, but some twenty others were lost by a total of 11,000 votes between them, among them the riding fought by Georges-Émile Lapalme. With the Union nationale practices of buying votes and tampering with electoral lists now common knowledge, there were strong grounds for the accusation that the government had stolen the election. It proceeded to attempt to do so under legal cover for the 1953 by-election that would bring Lapalme into the legislature in Outremont, by passing a law requiring only one government-appointed enumerator for each riding. The Liberals were able to organize a shadow enumeration campaign which irrefutably proved fraud, and countered the presence of Sureté du Québec police at riding polling stations on election day by drafting in police from the four municipalities surrounding Outremont.<sup>34</sup> On finally entering the legislature and taking his seat as leader of the opposition, Lapalme was astonished to discover that the Legislature was a veritable "barnumesque carnaval", Duplessis's kingdom, his "Luna Park".

Sa faiblesse tenait à son besoin de parler de tout et pour tous les ministres [...] Chaque jour, il revivait sa première victoire et s'appuyait sur les débris qu'il avait vus d'un parti libéral littéralement haché par les coups qu'il lui avait portés en 1936. Sans cesse, comme s'il eut craint un retour à la vie de ce qui était mort, il ramenait les spectres d'un passé vieux d'au moins 20 ans pour les tuer encore et il s'adressait à nous qui n'avions pas été là au temps des désastres en nous accusant d'avoir été les auteurs de ce qu'il avait détruit.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Le vent de l'oubli*: 140-144.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*: 166.

LaPalme's vision of this kingdom was never set in the Legislature. Instead, he sent Duplessis out into the city, into the countrysides and symbolic spaces of Québec. Very often, Duplessis was simply defined by his company. On June 13, 1951, LaPalme's first Duplessis figure for *Le Devoir* had cast him as the mother of a big family (his UN ministers), with the census man asking if Camilien Houde belongs to the family too (Figure 5-33). On August 14 Duplessis pulls a communist rabbit out of a hat while the rich US industrialist pulls off Baptiste's clothes (Figure 5-34). On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, he is caught in a slag heap of corruption (Figure 5-35); on September 9<sup>th</sup>, he ties up a labourer and on the 21<sup>st</sup>, revisits the scene of the fallen Duplessis bridge (Figure 5-36), to bless a twisted electricity wire with his scapula. This quick initial series of incarnations, which went on multiplying, soon became a rollicking, changing display.

A distinct range of Duplessis emerged. He was the companion to Baptiste, or to the worker. He was Ratapoil or the man of the Church. He was gangster, magician, violent threat, man of the scrap or dirt heap. He was old boy, bachelor, hoodlum attempting rape. He was housewife, politician on the hustings, or the almost abstract figure, the leader in a suit, lost in bewilderment among the proliferation of his own symbols. He was an everyman. He was many of the men and women who haunted Québec's self-imagination at mid-century. Like the parliamentary leader who was determined to control every minister, he is many-voiced in LaPalme's universe. And yet, although he materialized each of the charges wrought against the Chef in *Le Devoir's* editorials, corroborated in LaPalme's memoirs, LaPalme's Duplessis could not undo the man. His sheer rambunctious malevolence may be to blame. This irrepressible figure showed

resourcefulness, vigour: he kept returning to the scene of crimes that were perpetrated over and over again. And a good deal of the very personal attributes which had fuelled LaPalme's invective in 1943-44 and later on at *Le Canada* had been largely set aside.

It will be remembered that Maurice Duplessis returned to the campaign for power early in 1943, after a long spell in hospital brought on by a combination of alcoholism and diabetes and what was once known as a dissolute lifestyle. His biographers allude frequently to his womanizing in the 1930s and the early 1940s, before his health reached its crisis point. From 1943, Duplessis was celebrated as a teetotal celibate and quickly gained the reputation of the *vieux garçon*, the old bachelor – a term not always entirely salubrious. Like many such signs, the notion of sexual abstinence carries with it the notion of sexual indulgence as its counterpart. In the symbolic universe described and animated by Robert LaPalme, several key societal values float through this duality. Celibacy and abstinence are associated to the Church, to monastic life. Duplessis, like some novitiate nun, claimed to be “married to his province” much as a nun is “married to Christ”. This duality enters into a wider social practice, that of marriage and, in a catholic society, procreation. Québec was long held to be a society of enormous families operating through “la revanche du berceau.” To these images were joined the perplexing interpretations of communities peopled by large families and, at some level, a great deal of sexuality, at the same time regulated by celibate priests. Notions of sexual pleasure and sensuous enjoyment required negotiations through dogmatic teachings about reproductive submission. This realm of stereotypes functioned in the 1950s rhetoric of *Le Devoir* as a

link between often conflicted lived realities and satirical representations which arose out of the anxious positions these conflicts engendered.

With Maurice Duplessis as the symbol of a party and a “nation”, LaPalme, *Le Devoir* and the Liberal Party allowed themselves to take aim at the Premier and at these stereotypes in often surprising ways. At *Le Canada* in January 1949, Maurice Duplessis paced his room at the Château Frontenac restlessly, dealing with a crying obstreperous member of the UN, expostulating: “Dire que je suis resté garçon croyant m’éviter ces problèmes d’éducation!” (Figure 5-37). From a portrayal as *vieux garçon* to one of house mother, Duplessis’s celibacy left the sexual and reproductive function vacant and easily used. In this way, LaPalme had been able to imply homosexual attraction between Duplessis and Laurendeau in several 1944 caricatures. In January 1956, LaPalme literally dressed up Duplessis in a morality campaign. It was the occasion for unashamed mincing (Figure 5-38).

The recourse to sexuality was often easy for Robert LaPalme. His final *Le Canada* caricature found the young woman Italy about to be raped by the devil Yugoslav Communist Party (Figure 5-39). “Rose Latulipe fera-t-elle son signe de croix?” asked the caption, in reference to the play opening on the same day in which a young Québec woman must fend off the devil by reliance on her faith. Several social satires addressed women’s rôles, and many images emphasize the parts of the body with sexual or sensuous connotations – breasts, groin, hips, calves, the small of the back, the neck. For all LaPalme’s stylization, he carefully remembered to emphasize areas which afford the

excessive detail that signals direct observation, such as the lower abdomen (Figure 5-40, Claxton in a Spring hat, 1952), the pubis (Figure 5-41, *Les moments difficiles*) or the penis (Figure 5-42, Claxton on the beach). The examples involving Brooke Claxton show how quickly this degree of realism was attached to examples of cross-dressing and cross-racial identification, for the Claxton caricatures evoked his role in applying the Government's decision not to make the army bilingual. Hence *Le Devoir's* and LaPalme's accusation that Claxton thereby assigned French-Canadians the role of "white coloured people." The extent to which the consensus on matters of faith, reproduction, sexuality and group identity were bound together was developed around the naughtiness of pleasure in an untitled caricature of 1955 (Figure 5-43). Louis Saint-Laurent exhorts a crowd of men and women, "Le Canada devrait prendre des mesures pour atteindre une population de 30,000,000 avant 1975." The caption asks : « En augmentant les allocations familiales ou en admettant plus d'immigrants qui accenturont le chômage? » The jurisdiction over family allowances, a bugbear for federal-provincial relations, is contrasted to a remarkable injunction against immigration on the pretext of unemployment, an argument strongly reminiscent of Depression-era fears. This seems surprising unless we remember long-seated prejudices in both English and French Canada over the use immigration as a favoured means for one community to achieve the outnumbering of another. In a doubly ironic twist, Saint-Laurent's listeners seem perfectly oblivious to these issues of jurisdiction, economy and race: the women all frown, the men all smile, in contrasting perceptions over who will derive all the pleasure and who will bear all the burdens in the attainment of a population of 30,000,000 Canadians.

We can usefully compare this image of Saint-Laurent to another gathering of audience and politician, that of Duplessis addressing a crowd of women in late 1943 (Figure 4-20). In the earlier image, the women all smiled, as one confided to another that she would be selling her vote, and not for money. At this earlier juncture, Duplessis's nose appeared to be associated with phallic power, and the entire record of LaPalme's caricatures leaves no doubt that this nose continued to furnish the outstanding element of his graphic repertoire. While its sexual role or connotation was not necessarily foregrounded in every caricature, it often carried the significance of weaponry; and its almost autonomous existence re-imposed a key element of anti-semitic caricature before a public saturated with anti-semitic imagery articulated around the nose shape since the nineteenth century and particularly prevalent in French and Québec publications in the 1930s. It will be remembered how Jean-Louis Gagnon's wife Hélène Jobidon had drawn an especially virulent example of the genre with her caricature of Salome, John Bull and Baptiste (Figure 3-12).

More-or-less open and certainly unstable sexual and identity references (racial, political, religious) were thus present in virtually every incarnation of the Duplessis nose. At *Le Canada* following the 1949 election, it signified Duplessis's connection to the fecal mud which also covered his hands and marked his humiliation at Saint-Laurent's (overwhelming) victory (Figure 5-44). Just before LaPalme left *Le Canada* in 1951, it had been reduced to monstrous content in a box labelled "The Thing" (Figure 5-45). At *Le Devoir*, it was soon used to ennoble a thug. But since it appeared in every Duplessis

image to simply signify the presence of Duplessis's likeness, it became on the whole a simple marker. As yet uninvestigated for its graphic potential, it was used to establish the persona which was then associated to an outlandish situation in relation to *Le Devoir's* critique. The nose, like the man, changed little between 1943-44 and 1952.

#### **4. The Aging Duplessis Body**

A change overtook Robert LaPalme's Duplessis imagery around 1955-56, as the province prepared for yet another election (and yet another defeat for the Liberals). In reverse "Dorian Gray" fashion, LaPalme's Duplessis had retained a stability that belied the man's aging. LaPalme's achievement in the latter half of the decade was to transfer some of his unfettered attitude towards the highly-connoted body onto the face and torso of Maurice Duplessis, as a site that finally made visible the moral decay of his régime.

We saw examples of this approach to the body in 1944 caricatures of Duplessis and LaPalme in a bath and a shower, respectively, and in the Duplessis-Houde cherubs of - ...*Denrée périssables*. They made a hybrid of LaPalme's stylised undulating line and his brief but vital notes of the lived aging of the body – skin, bones, folds and jowls, the weight of non -idealized muscle and mass extending the characterization of the face, especially into the torso and into the pressure-points of arms and legs. This allusion to body elements in their lived specificity recurred in a January 13<sup>th</sup> 1949 drawing of Duplessis and Camilien Houde fused together in an ice sculpture ("La ville soutenant la Province"). The figures are again nude. When clothed, Duplessis is angry, malicious, fit,



and physically assumes any position LaPalme wishes him to. And in this he is truly fictitious, unlike the portly, static figure of period photographs. The recipe for Duplessis's countenance has been unchanged since 1943-44. The great tapering nose, less a carrot than a pointed wedge of cheese, stands out from sunken cheeks marked by an array of swift lines, over a cleft chin like a pair of testicles and a mouth with an advanced lower lip. Duplessis' hair was equally given to recipe, being a set swept back shape not unlike Tintin's (Figure 5-46). The crown of Duplessis' head finds his hair, always jet black, gathered to a point.

A deep change intervened at surface and depth levels in late 1955, at the time of the nationalist uproar over the naming of the new CPR hotel on Dorchester Boulevard, over the newly built CN station which replaced the old Gare Bonaventure, as the Queen Elizabeth Hotel. *Le Devoir* led the outcry, arguing vigorously that the new hotel should be known as the "Hôtel Maisonneuve", honouring Sieur Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve, rather than the young Queen of "Angleterre et Canada". The charges of English-Canadian colonization were traded with a new ferocity in "Hôtel Maisonneuve" (Figure 5-47). Duplessis's hair is now brushed back, and his open mouth reveals razor sharp teeth. He entreats Big Business to wait, while he wipes his hands, having just coming away from butchering Miss Québec who is trussed up to an "autonomie" butchers block, ankles tied back as far as the base of her back. A butcher's knife rests wobbling in her chest. The charge of violence and sexuality in this image, while hardly unique in LaPalme's work, attains a level more in keeping with the anti-Republican caricatures of *La Nation* in 1936, with a good deal of the humour draining away. The

shift towards the excessively irrational may be a measure of polemical anger and serve to make manifest degrees of violence in visual terms which *Le Devoir* could not attain in its textual rhetoric. This distinction also served to differentiate *Le Devoir* in 1955 from a tract such as *La Nation* in 1936, when Jean-Louis Gagnon's troubled and violent invective matched his wife-to-be's visual imagery. Effectively, LaPalme was reaching to the power of denunciatory, inflammatory and destructive imagery that is highly reminiscent of the excoriating strategies of Léon Bloy, who had once so inspired Olivar Asselin and through him, Claude-Henri Grignon (Valdombre). They imagined, as we have seen, extremes in sexual depiction in order to help destroy a symbolically corrupt order (see above, Chapter 2). The 1950s saw a huge revival of studies and editions devoted to Bloy's work, and his influence may well have resurfaced through the authority and example of his great admirer Jacques Maritain, himself a key influence on Filion and Laurendeau, who wrote extensively on Bloy along with his wife Raissa Maritain. We will return to the Bloy literature below.

#### **4.1. The 1956 election campaign : the unreasonable Duplessis**

Lapalme's Duplessis became an altogether malignant, elderly figure in the months preceding the 1956 election. LaPalme significantly altered the recipe. The nose became more pronounced, but through a new flaccidity. Not merely hooked, it is crooked, and disarticulated, its tip now bending arthritically forward. Duplessis stoops, using a crutch (Figure 5-48). On May 26<sup>th</sup>, LaPalme presented Duplessis as a boxer. The hybrid treatment of his body commands our attention. The legs and feet are the mural-style

renditions familiar from “Histoire de faire de l’histoire”, undulating and non-specific. Yet, while Duplessis puts a “police Provinciale” horseshoe into his boxing glove, LaPalme shows us the Chef’s ribs, and carefully enumerates grizzled folds at the base of the grotesque Premier’s face (Figure 5-49). He returned to this strategy on May 29<sup>th</sup> in the drawing *Absalom aussi... les avait trop longs* (Figure 5-50), as “Absalom” Duplessis’s hair is tangled in the elections tree. His chin appears now to emerge from his sternum, the folds of skin at the base of his neck and the indications of ribs combining to convey the decrepitude and age of the figure. In contrast, the earlier Duplessis figures, for all their spirited invective, seem to articulate no attack. Lapalme has passed in 1956 to a mode of cornering the specificity of the aged enemy of *Le Devoir*. The impression is infinitely more merciless. In October 1956, Duplessis, bachelor cleaner, retreats beyond a pile of rubbish on a nondescript landing, a nearby apartment characteristically padlocked. (Figure 5-51). On October 31<sup>st</sup> (admittedly Hallowe’en), “Maurice” is asked by Big Business to “hold down” (in English) while Baptiste’s entrails are scoured (Figure 5-52). Although Maurice looks away, we see the madly intent Big Business with his arm thrust deep inside Baptiste’s thorax, while a nearby bowl overflows with Baptiste’s vital organs and entrails. The effect is suggestive of Hogarth’s satires of medicine in 18<sup>th</sup> century London and effectively pushes LaPalme’s work onto registers of explicit corporeal violation. This violence is also signalled by the complete abandon of decorum in the depiction of Duplessis’ face. It would recur in other, paradoxical references to decay and rape. The butchery reappeared in LaPalme’s response to the re-election of Duplessis in June 1956: Baptiste commits Hara-Kiri (Figure 5-53).

As the parallel, satiric world of Duplessis became more and more properly abysmal, it collapsed and rendered inoperative (in its own symbolic realm, communicated to *Devoir* readers) the whole social order which Duplessis and his régime symbolized. Duplessis had both made himself and been made into the personification of this order. Authority, discipline, the primacy of one-party government and one-leader power, and the surreptitious control of spiritual institutions through coercive manipulations of the Church hierarchy, had succeeded in fusing the image and public perception of Duplessis with a traditionalist, religion-based view of the French-Canadian nation.

With religion as the apparent lynchpin of this circulation of the image of Duplessis in fusion with “his people”, LaPalme reintroduced a productive seam of derision by making Duplessis a high priest of superstition in a series of caricatures that precede and follow on from the 1956 election. The first in this series was the May 3<sup>rd</sup> 3-7-14-21 (Figure 5-54). LaPalme had visited the theme before, in the January 14 1952 “Chez les païens, un mercredi.” Looking for a good election date in a crystal ball, the numbers seem auspicious: components of the year 1952, the day of the week chosen for the June election (25), Duplessis’s birth date (25), adding everywhere up to 7. Duplessis is dressed in magician’s hat and gown adorned with stars and one padlock; the costume is reminiscent of that in Medieval medicine panel of the “History of Medicine through the Ages” series of gouaches exhibited in the 1940s. A poster on the wall reads “3\*7, Abracadabra, UN vaga.” Finally, the secondary caption explains: “3 fois 7 = 21. 2+1 = 3. C’est infallible!” This overtly “pagan” or medieval, pre-scientific belief in numerology, a kind of numerancy, was ascribed to Duplessis in a 1952 image, which presented him as a

snickering devil in a churchyard where Democracy lay buried. Three notorious Bills, nos 12, 34 and 56, abrogating the rights to contest elections or to investigate graft, make up a magic sequence which ends in “mon chiffre chanceux” (Figure 5-55). This same lucky number (the election date in July 1952) is also used to show a slightly alarmed Duplessis claiming his impending election luck, while his shadow shows his body hanging by the very same number, become a gallows pole (Figure 5-56). In May 1956, Duplessis appears to have lost all enthusiasm, and is adrift in a long series of calculations that invade the background and foreground of the drawing. LaPalme speaks to us through the signs littering the front of the drawing space, attached to nothing in particular. “Pour Maurice/Cette science païenne est éprouvée.” Along with the loss of enthusiasm, a lethargic countenance has taken over the figure; his preoccupied, bored presence emanates from the new graphic treatment of his face and especially of his nose. And yet the nose signals a new source of inventiveness for LaPalme.

Three 1956 images unpack “The Thing” and give it its full comic potential. On August 28<sup>th</sup>, Santa Maurice (“Ça parl’ au yabl”) looks into the treasury Christmas bag only to find it perforated, a reality for which his nose, disappearing far into the bag, may be responsible. The nose is now cleft at the cascading tip, while its setting of cheeks is reduced to a few folds and the mouth below has become gawping and certainly toothless (Figure 5-57). On September 19, in a similar vein, Duplessis covers his receding lips, hooking his thumb into his nostril and LaPalme scratches nose and hand hairs by scraping through the outline with a scalpel. “Je l’ai dans le nez”, he says of the press, of les québécois, of public morals and of the Tremblay Report (a constitutional report on

provincial and federal spheres of jurisdiction over social policy that Duplessis had commissioned in 1954 but had never released to the public) (Figure 5-58). On October 11<sup>th</sup>, numeracy and nose united. Duplessis rests his nose in the grip of his left hand, elbow on desk, while he predicts the date of the 1960 election by running through all his lucky dates so far (Figure 5-59). His lower teeth lie in a glass by his writing paper. Here LaPalme has returned to the recipe hair. This new, elderly Duplessis has perhaps begun to assume the traits of recipe once more. The contrast between recipe cartooning and psychological caricature was most clearly drawn in the June 2<sup>nd</sup> campaign satire on Duplessis's pledge to build more asylums if re-elected. As a figure in the audience withdraws his pipe to remark to his neighbour, "ce sera alors d'une évidente nécessité", perhaps because Duplessis and his electors ought to be committed. The towering figure of le Chef fills the foreground (Figure 5-60). Atop all the swiftly drawn shorthand cartooning, a satiric head of Maurice Duplessis rests, seen in three-quarters from the rear for once. The hair is drawn as if paying attention to its strands as it emerges from the crown of his head. The jet black is modulated into grey; capillary lines of age hatch down Duplessis's emaciated cheek, finishing in flaccid jowls, as a great crooked nose and jutting chin, articulating a turtle-beak mouth, are delineated in two expressive and thick dry-brush strokes of dense ink. After years of sensuous caricatures, Robert LaPalme arrived at a de-aestheticised portrait that rested satiric purpose onto insight based in the psychology of the aging face and body. The power of the image appears to attack the subject – but may also confer onto the subject the power of the image.

#### 4.2. 1958 – “La théorie du roi nègre”

Maurice Duplessis never fought the 1960 election envisaged in Robert LaPalme's October 1956 caricature. Death came in September 1959, in Duplessis's famed Ungava. By this time, Lapalme had left *Le Devoir*, hired away by his old friend Jean-Louis Gagnon who, in 1958, had taken over the direction of *La Presse*. The encapsulation of the order soon to be swept away shifted from the representation of Duplessis to another representation based in language. André Laurendeau, writing in September 1959 on the paucity of French expression in Québec – a favoured theme of Olivar Asselin's – elicited a response from Frère Pierre Jérôme (Jean-Paul Desbiens). The correspondence between the two grew swiftly, with Laurendeau republishing Frère Pierre-Jérôme's letters. Under the pseudonym of Frère Untel, these contained devastating attacks on the quality of teaching of the French language and culture at the hands of the Québec Church. In the summer of 1960, soon after the election of Jean Lesage's Liberals, a collection of these letters was published by Éditions de l'Homme as *Les Insolences du Frère Untel*. Pierre-Jérôme avowed the destructive rôle he had to accomplish in the opening pages of the book.

Déblayer n'est pas œuvrer; il faut pourtant commencer par déblayer; et avant même de déblayer, il faut démolir. Saint Léon Bloy se déclarait entrepreneur en démolition. Je relaye Léon Bloy, génie en moins (il faut que je dise ça, mais je n'en crois rien), à cinquante ans de distance, comme il convient dans un pays où l'on vit avec un retard de deux révolutions et demie : horloge d'Amérique, heure du Moyen-Âge.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Jean-Paul Desbiens, *Les insolences du Frère Untel* (Montréal : Les Éditions de l'Homme, 2000 [1960]): 18.

As it attained unheard-of sales of 150,000 copies, the book's blend of polemic, satire and reportage, articulated around need for the secularization of teaching in French Québec, met the prevailing mood of a province emerging from 15 years of Union Nationale government. Robert LaPalme was now in much the same position of his hero David Low after the end of the Second World War. At the disappearance of a heroic cause, its heroic leader (Churchill) and an evil nemesis (Hitler) also receded from centre stage. Low appeared to lose the well-spring of his graphic inventiveness.

It might also be that caricature lost its place at the centre of the attack on power in Québec, in favour of the recourse to language, well before the publication of *Les insolences du Frère Untel*. In June 1958, *Le Devoir* broke open a scandal of tremendous proportions. The natural gas company of Québec had recently been capitalized through an issue of shares on the stock market. Pierre Laporte, the veteran *Devoir* reporter and columnist who had assiduously documented the extraordinary behaviour of Maurice Duplessis in the Legislative Assembly since 1949, discovered that Union nationale ministers had subsequently purchased and traded shares. They effectively benefited from what would later be termed as insider knowledge. They were certainly in conflict of interest since they were the government officials responsible, in cabinet, for establishing the terms of the stock flotation. The affair lit up the summer of 1958. Maurice Duplessis ordered all the ministers involved to take out legal action against *Le Devoir* in order to make the matter sub judice and give the said ministers shelter from issuing any comment whatsoever.



In 1958, LaPalme penned some of his most excessive caricatures of Duplessis whose collapsing mouth, his ever-lengthening nose and his greying hair were often denoted, in a few brief lines. On September 2<sup>nd</sup>, directly inspired by *Le Devoir*'s role in the Natural Gas scandal, LaPalme returned to the magician Duplessis. He is stooped, with claws for fingertips, his aged face with a dripping nose, as he calculates sums once again for alleged elections (not due for two more years), while natural gas heats a pot holding the nude figures of Lorendo, Filion and Laporte (Figure 5-61).

Duplessis's anger at *Le Devoir* was certainly fierce. At his weekly press conference of Friday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, he had ordered the young parliamentary reporter Guy Lamarche to leave the room; faced with Lamarche's refusal, Premier Duplessis summoned the provincial police to expel the reporter. *Le Devoir*'s indignation was swift and thorough, expressed on the front page of the next day's edition. Over the ensuing week, Gérard Filion and André Laurendeau observed the responses from other newspapers, both francophone and anglophone, which it expected to denounce the government and what *Le Devoir* held to be a blatant personal and institutionalized attack on the freedom of the press. The reactions were tepid at best and, from its anglophone colleagues virtually nonexistent.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The *Montreal Star*'s and the *Montreal Gazette*'s close connections to Maurice Duplessis have been thoroughly documented. See Black (1977): 611-612. See also Alain G. Gagnon and Louiselle Lévesque, "Le Devoir et la Gazette face aux gouvernements Duplessis", in Alain G. Gagnon and Michel Sarra-Bournet, eds. *Duplessis. Entre la Grande Noirceur et la société libérale* (Montréal: Québec Amérique, 1997) : 55-85. In the same volume, reporter Guy Lamarche remembers the famous incident of his expulsion from Duplessis's office, in "Une presse docile, sauf exception" (87-93).

Filion responded on Thursday July 3<sup>rd</sup> with an angry editorial. On Friday July 4<sup>th</sup>, Robert LaPalme's caricature "Quand il "nettoie" la place" showed a wild-eyed Duplessis kicking the angel *Le Devoir* out, to rejoin the other "virtues": liberty, probity and fidelity, also reeling from physical assault (Figure 5-62). But in a second editorial on the silence of its press colleagues, André Laurendeau went further, using what amounts, in terms of the caricature we have surveyed, to an *ut pictura poesis* device. It unleashed a deeply rooted imagery and imaginary of identity, in the editorial "La théorie du roi nègre." After damning his francophone press colleagues with faint praise, and summing up the arguments against Premier Duplessis's anti-democratic and anti-parliamentary behaviour, Laurendeau continued:

[...] D'habitude, les anglophones sont plus sensibles que nous aux atteintes à toutes les formes de liberté. C'est pourquoi M. Duplessis a mauvaise presse en dehors du Québec. Les attaques qu'il subit en Ontario ou au Manitoba ne s'inspirent pas toujours de cette doctrine : les vieux préjugés de « race » et de langue s'y donnent souvent à cœur joie. Mais nous aurions tort de tout expliquer par des préjugés ethniques. Les Britanniques ont conquis peu à peu des libertés politiques; ils en connaissent davantage le prix; ils sont plus sensibles d'habitude aux menaces qui pèsent sur elles, D'habitude, écrivons-nous. [...]

L'expulsion de Guy Lamarche vendredi dernier est dure à avaler. Les journaux anglais commencent par se taire. La *Gazette* émet avant-hier, au milieu d'un article sympathique au gouvernement, la protestation la plus froide qui se puisse imaginer. Hier le *Star* déclare le geste de M. Duplessis maladroit mais ne parvient pas à le juger mauvais. Pourquoi?

Les journaux anglophones du Québec se comportent comme les Britanniques au sein d'une colonie d'Afrique.

Les Britanniques ont le sens politique, ils détruisent rarement les institutions politiques d'un pays conquis. Ils entourent le roi-nègre mais ils lui passent des fantaisies. Ils lui ont permis à l'occasion de couper des têtes : ce sont les mœurs du pays. Une chose ne leur viendrait pas en tête : et c'est de réclamer d'un roi nègre qu'il se conforme aux hauts standards moraux et politiques des Britanniques.

Il faut obtenir du roi nègre qu'il collabore et protège les intérêts des Britanniques. Cette collaboration assurée, le reste importe moins. Le roitelet viole les règles de la démocratie? On ne saurait attendre mieux d'un primitif...

[...]Le résultat, c'est une régression de la démocratie et du parlementarisme, un règne plus incontesté de l'arbitraire, une collusion constante de la finance anglo-québécoise avec ce que la politique de cette province a de plus pourri.<sup>38</sup>

With this editorial, the premise for Robert LaPalme's caricature was unexpectedly, but definitively withdrawn. *Le Devoir* had named again the identity divide that dated as far back as its editorials on the Asbestos crisis and LaPalme's caricatures of Brooke Claxton's refusal to allow French in the Canadian armed forces, but this time the "nègres blancs" were crowned with a "roi nègre" and the entire symbolic order of identity representation was made manifest in the textual realm. LaPalme's visual attacks on Maurice Duplessis could not ford this divide. At their most powerful, they now gave a face to "ce qu'il y a de plus pourri".

Laurendeau's textual emancipation of angry, racially charged irony was highly productive for the posthumous reception of Maurice Duplessis, as the subsequent historiographical record shows. It can be argued that the *Bloyen* energy that LaPalme had maintained through his increasingly excoriating visual attacks after 1955 kept visible a critical and satirical power in measure to the absence of ferocity and manipulated imagery in the literary political field. Laurendeau's achievement is important for caricature in two ways. It provides double subtexts. Calling forth an affiliation of identities, making Québec into another of Britain's African colonies devastated by the

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<sup>38</sup> André Laurendeau, "La théorie du roi nègre", *Le Devoir*, July 4th 1958 : 4. The text is also reprinted in Gérard Boismenu, Laurent Mailhot and Jacques Rouillard, *Le Québec en textes* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1980): 13-14.

operations of Empire, Laurendeau was to make imaginable the visual elements that visual caricature could not address. For a *visual* depiction of Maurice Duplessis as “nègre” was not imaginable, no more than it could be for Louis Saint-Laurent in 1950 or for Wilfrid Laurier in 1899, when LaPalme and Julien before him had resisted the recourse to stereotypic physiognomy. The way was clear for Laurendeau to fuse the visual prosecution of the enemy directly into language, and it was within language and the literary that the imminent forces of satire and polemic such as Frère Untel’s writings (and, beyond them, the satiric theatre of the 1960s) would operate. The imminent end of the Age of Duplessis was also heralding the end of a powerful age of caricature in Québec.

#### **4.3. Robert LaPalme at Jacques Hébert’s *Vrai*, 1954-59: the metropolitan challenge to Duplessis**

There was, however, another forum for LaPalme’s power as a caricaturist. This was the journal *Vrai*, founded by Jacques Hébert in 1954 as a vehicle for the ideas of the Ligue d’action civique (LAC). This new political organization was devoted to reforming Duplessis’s Québec. From 1954 until his final days at *Le Devoir*, Robert LaPalme published graphic satires regularly in its pages, chiefly on municipal matters but also on themes that directly extended the anti-Duplessis work at *Le Devoir*. The LAC asserted itself in Montreal politics from 1952 to 1959, and was itself largely a result of the activism fostered by *Le Devoir* in the years 1948-1951. The LAC became a dynamic force for change and renewal, first and foremost in municipal politics, albeit with pretensions to speak at the “national” level of Québec. The principal figures of the LAC

were Jean Drapeau, Pierre Des Marais and Léon-Z. Patenaude.<sup>39</sup> Jean Drapeau (1916-1999), often seen as a politician destined to a provincial or a federal rôle, devoted his career to Montréal, serving as its mayor for 31 years (1954-57, 1960-1986). LaPalme and Drapeau formed a close friendship, with Drapeau bringing his friend into the inner circle of major municipal projects once LaPalme's career as a daily caricaturist effectively ended in 1962. Under Drapeau, LaPalme served as artistic director of the mural decorations for the first wave of métro stations (opened in 1966) and as director of Pavillon de l'humour at Expo 67 and of the Salon international de la caricature at Terre des hommes and other sites in Montreal (1968-1988).<sup>40</sup>

But at the outset of what would become a long-term shift out of caricature towards a curatorial rôle within Montréal's professional structure, LaPalme was foremost a caricaturist whose satire depended on a close identification between the municipal and provincial arenas of government. That is, his satire was one of the methods of critical assault on the provincial régime – what might be termed Québec's national body politic – from the precinct of the Cité, specifically from the standpoint of Montreal's appropriation of a metropolitan leadership. In this instance, a traditional pattern in Quebec history was reversed: for whereas political partisanship had normally used journalism and the press as media of transmission and persuasion, the LAC grew out of investigative journalism.

Drapeau and Patenaude's LAC had its impetus in *Montréal sous le règne de la pègre*, a series of exposés on corruption in the municipal police force, that had appeared in *Le*

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<sup>39</sup> LaPalme (1997): 68.

<sup>40</sup> LaPalme (1997): 122-124.

*Devoir* under the name of whistle-blower Pacifique (“Pax”) Plante, a lawyer, recorder of court and former assistant director of police (fired in 1948 for his investigations into the actions of his superiors). The articles appeared between November 1949 and February 1950. They were ghost-written by *Le Devoir* journalist Gérard Pelletier, who had also been a leader among the reporters covering the Asbestos strike in the same year. As we saw in Chapter four, Jean Drapeau had first come to public attention in the conscription crisis of 1942, when he was an activist for the No vote alongside André Laurendeau and Henri Bourassa. He was later an organizer for Laurendeau and was himself an unsuccessful candidate in the Bloc populaire slates of 1944 and 1948. In 1949, he was also involved in the Asbestos affair. As a lawyer for asbestos workers claiming damages, Drapeau was uncompromisingly hostile to Duplessis. He joined Plante’s campaign to clean up corruption in the Montreal police force, a corruption whose responsibility was laid at the feet of a lax, and equally corrupt, Union Nationale government at Québec City. This campaign was adopted by a group of 74 citizens who joined forces in 1950 as the Comité de morale publique, among them Pierre Des Marais, Léon Patenaude and *Le Devoir* editor Gérard Filion. It sought a judicial enquiry into the corruption uncovered by Pax Plante and established its political wing, the Ligue d’action civique, in 1951. Drapeau and Plante were the lawyers for the judicial enquiry headed by Judge Caron, whose damning report was delivered on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1954. On the same day, Drapeau announced his candidacy for the position of mayor in the upcoming election of November. At the same time the party began to receive unalloyed support from a newspaper launched almost simultaneously: Jacques Hébert’s *Vrai*. Drapeau and the LAC were swept into office for a three year term.

Jacques Hébert, born in 1923, had also come to public attention through a series of articles in *Le Devoir*, in 1951-53. His positions against Maurice Duplessis and in favour of municipal reform were entirely in keeping with those of *Le Devoir*, and he pursued them in *Vrai, un journal de combat* partly in the ideological mold of the monthly journal *Cité Libre* (founded in 1950 by Gérard Pelletier and Hébert's childhood friend Pierre Elliott Trudeau). Unlike this journal of ideas, however, *Vrai* marked a strong departure for political journalism in Québec. Its difference was marked by its graphic layout and its unusual blend of contents. Its logo, a red italic sans serif bold univers font *Vrai* inside a black circle framed by a black square, acted like a spotlight whose graphic impact had a percussive effect within the layout of front page headlines, with or two brief articles, and a LaPalme caricature taking pride of place on the right hand side of the page (Figure 5-63). By sporting this innovative tabloid design, *Vrai* ironically adapted the format of the sensationalist newsprint magazine to a political weekly journal mix of reportage, opinion pieces, spoofs (a regular column entitled *pas vrai* presented utterly false news), cultural reviews (especially of films and literature) and caricatures by Lapalme and Berthio (Roland Berthiaume, born in 1927). The irony came from the fact that *Vrai* would champion the fight against the *presse jaune* – the sensationalist press whose format it borrowed. The LAC, like the Comité de morale publique, did not restrict its investigation to police and civic administration. It also weighed in on television and the influence of “yellow” or gutter newspapers, and their emphasis on criminality and sexuality. These papers were also heavy users of illustration, caricature and cartoons. From the first issue of *Vrai* on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1954, the LaPalme caricatures were accompanied by a set of 4

of Berthio's drawings inside the paper, under the rubric *Drôle de semaine* (Figure 5-64). Berthio's work conflated the structure of the ephemeral gag cartoon to the purposes of political caricature, and LaPalme frequently infused his graphic satires with the virtuosity attendant on his portrait caricatures, as in his portrayal of Québec comedienne and actress Juliette Béliveau (Figure 5-65).

The great majority of LaPalme's and Berthio's work for *Vrai* dealt with municipal politics; at the same time, many simultaneously addressed Maurice Duplessis. Effectively, *Vrai* established the LAC in Montreal politics as an opposition to Georges-Emile Lapalme's Liberal Party. By 1958, the reader of *Vrai* could be forgiven for believing that the LAC was the provincial government-in-waiting. Although Jean Drapeau lost the November 1957 election to Sarto Fournier (who soon fired Pax Plante), the ensuing three years saw the LAC gradually assert strength in regrouping while the Liberals lay fallow in the aftermath of the Union Nationale's 1956 victory. *Le Devoir*, *Vrai*, *Cité Libre* and the LAC led the fight against Duplessis while the political left sought to reorganize either under the Liberals or under a new coalition, the Union démocratique. A new party was formed, the Parti social démocratique (PSD) and the independence movement, fairly dormant since the days of Paul Bouchard's *La nation*, revived under figures such as Raymond Barbeau, whom we will return to below. The period was marked in LaPalme's work at *Le Devoir* by an increasingly bitter, no-holds-barred approach, as we have seen in detail. But LaPalme went even further at *Vrai*. This was doubtless because *Vrai*, by its very nature, could go further.



Jacques Hébert partly explained how this came to be in a valedictory address of his own delivered shortly before the adventure of *Vrai* ended in May 1959.<sup>41</sup> He had carried the burden of publishing alone in 1954-55; in the next two years, anonymous donors had enabled the weekly to carry on as an utterly independent voice. In late 1957, a committee of LAC leaders formed Les éditions de la Cité to assist in *Vrai*'s survival. Hébert had carried on under the assurance of complete editorial independence; and in any case, his support for the LAC was resolute. He conceded that from late 1957 onwards, municipal politics gained even more prominence. But he stressed that this emphasis was in keeping with his own principles. Only a recent ideological divergence over adherence to the Union démocratique (a coalition of anti-Duplessis forces) now compelled him to leave *Vrai*, since his position was inimical to the LAC's ambitions for itself. By this time, Robert LaPalme's caricatures had ceased to appear in *Vrai*, following his move to *La Presse* (a move celebrated by *Vrai* in late February 1959).<sup>42</sup> The remaining cultural coverage of books, films, theatre and art fizzled out, and in the two weeks after Hébert's departure – *Vrai*'s last before its abrupt disappearance – the paper was entirely given over to LAC political positions. Even Berthio's gag cartoons vanished.

It was a far cry from the months following the LAC's initial support, when *Vrai* had achieved a distinct polemical presence unlike anything else in the political landscape of the period. There were distant echoes of the force of *La Nation*, but this time allied to a position infinitely more personalist and humanist. And yet the vocabularies of revilement percolated in the attitude exemplified by headlines and caricatures. The issues published

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<sup>41</sup> Jacques Hébert, "Pourquoi j'abandonne la direction de "Vrai"." *Vrai*, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1959: 8.

<sup>42</sup> Jacques Hébert, "Révolution à "La Presse". Robert LaPalme reste libre...". *Vrai*, February 14<sup>th</sup> 1959: 10.

from November 1957, just after the mayoral election, through July 1958 and the aftermath of the Natural Gas scandal, show this attitude well. LaPalme took the lead in setting *Vrai*'s tone, and there was a unique consequence for his graphic choices.

In *Le Comité des Bills Très Privés* of February 15<sup>th</sup> 1958, four members of the Fournier administration take their leave of Maurice Duplessis amid obsequious declarations of approval for his municipal affairs policy (Figure 5-66). The four are seen retreating towards us. Their torsos are bent forward, hidden by their legs. They thrust their posteriors towards us as they approach a door frame that also serves as the drawing's edge. LaPalme's characteristic shape-system emphasizes the cheeks and leg muscles of the councillors' posteriors as four undulating pairs of black-trousered legs create a pattern of billowing and tapering solid shapes, across which identifying legends are scrawled in white. Four typeset citations are incorporated pell-mell into the surrounding white space. In the background, the caption reads "...On pouvait distinguer à l'arrière-plan M. le premier ministre..." Indeed, we can just see the shoulders and head of Duplessis who appears to be sucking on the end of his nose as he strokes his chin in approval. This is one of the briefest of LaPalme's indications of the essential descriptors of Duplessis's face.

The issue of February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1958 was altogether emblematic of *Vrai*'s position in this period (Figure 5-67). Atop the front page, the headline "La démocratie violée à Québec" reintroduced the tone of *La Nation*, the virulence of whose imagery surfaced in one of the most unrestricted of Robert LaPalme's published works, *Un valentin au grand Maurice* (Figure 5-68). *Grand Maurice* lurches towards us in the darkness; his naked figure fills

the frame. Although his limbs in particular are once again LaPalme's billow-and-taper shorthand shapes, they bear the briefest traces that can mark the presence of a real body, working through and against the stylization – hair on pale skin of chest and thigh, a point for one nipple, a slight recession indicating the top of another, two folds where the figure's right leg advances over the torso, criss-crossed band-aids on the right posterior cheek. And then, rising up in triumph from the torso, a great triangular head seen full-on, the nose flapping down the centre between wild, unmarked eyes, barring the way to a mouth agape above a massive chin. The hair is striated, stylized, dashing a staccato rhythm of mock expressionist woodcut lines. This Maurice Duplessis is a summary of LaPalme's life and times as a graphic artist. It reaches back to his earliest geometric designs, wrought into a hybrid whose violence is in keeping with the deliberate clumsiness that pervades the image. The man before us, primeval, almost ape-like in his stance, smashes down a plank with an embedded nail. It scatters impact-marks just over the edge of the caption: "Ta peur de Pierre, Jean, Jacques/ Te fait faire des embardées/ Pour te défendre tu attaques/ Comme un désespéré."

In the remainder of the issue and over the ensuing months, other elements came to amplify the tenor of this drawing. There was violence, and instability: "La démocratie violée", the attacking wild man Duplessis. The headline at the foot of the page underlined instability and hostility through hybrid language. *Des jeunes gens masqués "raident" les étalages de journaux orduriers*: the use of *raid* infiltrates a word of English into a phrase that indicates violent reprisals against news-sellers carrying gutter press publications. On page 7 of the same issue, Berthio's *drôle de semaine* featured a drawing of Maurice

Duplessis using Fournier councilman J.-Marie Savignac as a pea-shooter – an act that required blowing air up the Savignac pea-shooter’s rear end (Figure 5-69). The recourse to such explicit anal humour, from the *Comité des bills* drawing to Berthio’s, places the posturing of the nude Duplessis in a different context. The revealing of the body and its waste functions, the allusions to corporeal violence, continued apace in the following weeks. On March 8<sup>th</sup>, LaPalme presented Duplessis about to toss a trussed dog, “education”, into the water. He complicitly looks back to us seeking our approbation and our complicity. The trussed dog is tied to his own neck (Figure 5-70). “Chu tanné de l’entend’ japper!” exclaims the Premier. His language is debased. The most self-aware being in the drawing is the dog, much like the female Québec figure tied up to a butcher’s block that we saw above. On March 15<sup>th</sup>, Berthio presented a shaking Duplessis explicitly pissing himself in *Les hauts faits du 1er minus. Le 6 mars- Duplessis fait dans ses culottes* (Figure 5-71). The crude humour of this stark representation is leaking out from the realm of the drawing into that of the text, albeit still at the level of the cartoon caption, rather than in headline or main text. LaPalme ironically reinforced this prevailing hierarchy of discourse by suddenly reaching across to the “highest” of artforms to lampoon the municipal administration of Sarto Fournier, as one of a series entitled *Les tableaux célèbres*. On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, the city councillors fill a parody of Rembrandt’s *Anatomy Lesson of Doctor Tulp* (Figure 5-72). The drawing plays liberally with over-obvious identifications and scalloped collars, and alludes to art-historical study on the nature of portraiture by having two of the councillors smilingly look out at us, one embarrassedly so. The surgical intrusion into the body by Doctor [Jean-Marie] Savignac [President of the Executive Committee] undoes the humorous premise and returns the

image to the precise inspection of anatomy, of vessel, sinew and muscle. The following week, Mayor Sarto Fournier became Girodet's *Endymion asleep*, his genitals covered by the yellow press – *Ici Montréal*, *Allô Police*, *Nouvelles et Potins* and “Le Star” – J. W. McConnell's *Montreal Star*, a close and generous supporter of the Duplessis administration (Figure 5-73). The cupid Councillor Jargailles gazes (more or less) fondly towards Endymion, holding foliage aside to let the moonlight through. The drawing reprised the poses of the voluptuous and androgynous Endymion and Cupid, unto the shower of golden light that Cupid has play across the sleeping Endymion's ravishing body, apparently waiting to be ravished. Just as LaPalme had done with André Laurendeau in 1943—44, when he had conflated Laurendeau's childhood participation in ballet with an allusion to cross-dressing homosexuality as a Spanish dancer, he signals ridicule through reference to a ridiculed sexuality. The ridicule is fleshed out, so to speak, by keeping the figures “true” in some measure to their real physiques, pot-bellies and all. A remarkable voyeurism is enabled for the viewer who is the “ravisher” imagined by LaPalme's image. The grim unsmiling caricature portraits of Sarto Fournier and councillor Jargailles complete the sense of grotesque contradictions that utterly invalidate the politicians. The realm of artistic representation of the human body, with all the overlapping possibilities of depiction specific to an individual as opposed to idealised and generalized representation, finds its ultimate carnivalesque ordering in these drawings that are almost meta-caricatural, satirical about the order of satiric imagery.

This series of images made by LaPalme in February and March 1958 represented the two extremes to which he could reach: the admittedly rare brutality of *Un valentin au Grand*

*Maurice* contrasting to the rich sophistication of the caricaturist playing with the history of art. Neither of LaPalme's extremes resembles the stripped-down approach of Berthio or the spidery, dark explorations of Normand Hudon. They are among his most pronounced engagements with the polemical tradition in France and Québec that resulted in *Vrai*'s headline of July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1958 (the same week that André Laurendeau published *La théorie du roi nègre*).

*Le peuple vomira le régime Duplessis!* screamed the main headline in capital letters. If the phrase had not been immediately attributed to Pierre Des Marais – a headline lower down in the page claims the exposure of the gas scandal as Drapeau's achievement - we might truly believe that a copy of Jean-Louis Gagnon and Paul Bouchard's 1936 *La Nation* had been set before us.

#### **4.4. Duplessis outcast**

But the date is 1958, and the presence of the word "vomira" – will vomit – not only rounds out the corporeal allusions present since November 1957, it also calls to account the deeply embedded (indeed, latent) influence of the apocalyptic satire of Léon Bloy. Bloy's historiographical record spanned novels, historical studies, and journalism for daily newspapers (religious and secular), among them the *Chat noir* and the *Figaro*. In Bloy studies, the image of the critic "qui vomit son temps" recurs endlessly. We have seen Bloy's name and memory punctuate the present study, from Olivar Asselin and Valdombre through the tribute paid by Jean-Paul Desbiens, in his annotations to his own

1959-1960 *Insolences du Frère Untel* – the text with which *Le Devoir* took another step forward to a redefined critique of the Duplessis era, one that dispensed with visual caricature as a chief weapon. But the Bloyen influence does seem to have been present in LaPalme's work in 1957-58, at least insofar as it connected to the visual and textual vocabularies of persuasion used by *Vrai* in this period. Indeed, although a comprehensive study of Bloy's influence and traces in Québec political and artistic culture remains to be undertaken, a study of available indicators makes it difficult to underestimate his presence and impact in post -World War II Québec.<sup>43</sup>

This influence had begun with the close of the war, as part of the Québec-based efforts to disseminate French culture. In 1945, Éditions Serge (the same publisher that issued Montreal Repertory Theatre founder Mario Dulani's *Deux heures de fou rire* in 1944, with a cover by LaPalme) published *Inédits de Léon Bloy*.<sup>44</sup> This slim volume presented previously unpublished fragments by Bloy, with a commentary by Joseph Bollery, Bloy's biographer and bibliographer. This was not simply an instance of Quebec standing in for France as a place of publication: Bollery presented an unfinished speech that Bloy had intended to present in Québec where he had been invited to emigrate in 1878.<sup>45</sup> Bollery had read the 1937 *Pamphlet de Valdombre* which Claude-Henri Grignon had devoted to Bloy. We remember that Grignon and Asselin had discussed together, and each praised on their own, Bloy's rhetoric of excessive and destructive satire; that Grignon had

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<sup>43</sup> The remarkable growth of Bloy studies in Québec from the middle of the Second World War onwards can be ascertained in a close reading of Giovanni Dotoli's 1970 bibliographic review, *Situation des études bloyennes suivie d'une bibliographie de 1950 à 1969* (Paris, Éditions A.-G. Nizet, 1970).

<sup>44</sup> *Inédits de Léon Bloy*. Introduction de René Martineau; présentation de Joseph Bollery, Comte Carton de Wiart et Georges Rouzet. Montréal, Éditions Serge, 1945.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*: 25.

published a study of Bloy as early as 1925; and that Asselin had invoked Bloy in praising LaPalme in 1934.

In 1949, the *Cercle Léon Bloy* was founded in Quebec by Thomas Migneault, who published an article on Bloy's *prophétisme* in *Le Devoir* on January 21<sup>st</sup>. The *Cercle Léon Bloy* has been seen as one of the key training grounds for the Québec independence movement. Journal articles in the *Revue dominicaine* and *Hebdo-Laval* followed in 1951. Starting in 1953 Bloy was the subject of dissertations in religious studies, chiefly at the Université de Montréal and Université Laval. In 1955, Raymond Barbeau, who went on to be one of the founders of the Rassemblement de l'indépendance du Québec, defended a thesis at the Sorbonne, published in 1957 as *Un prophète luciférien*.<sup>46</sup> Barbeau also initiated a revival of the *Laurentie* movement, effectively renewing the extreme right-wing separatist ideas of the 1930s twenty years later. Barbeau and his acolytes' contributions to the movement were denigrated with the emergence of the Parti québécois in 1966-67. 1967 was also the last of the years of prolific output of Bloy studies in Québec. From 1955 until the late 1960s, general newspaper articles and radio broadcasts had proliferated. Guy Robert, future inaugural Director of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, devoted articles to Bloy in the *Revue dominicale* for November 1957 and in *Le Petit Journal* in August 1962.<sup>47</sup>

As was the case with Jean-Paul Desbiens, it was not always the fundamentalist and apocalyptic Bloy who was adopted by all those who turned to his work. Held to be

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<sup>46</sup> Paris, Aubier, 1957.

<sup>47</sup> *Revue dominicaine*, November 1957: 251; *Le Petit Journal*, August 12 1962: 10.



essentially poetic, this *oeuvre* was celebrated for its paradoxes, not least of which was an 'excoriating tenderness'. It held promise for a post-rational, and post-personalist worldview. Desbiens above all admired Bloy as an *entrepreneur en démolition de réputations*. Judging by the bibliographic record for the 1950s and 1960s, there seems to have been a significant place accorded to Bloy in this period, and he was productive for many varying ideological and artistic positions, whether as a source for theological studies or the history of French literature. For more than one commentator, he represented a line of Catholic poetic critique that linked him with Baudelaire and the engagement with the fallen nature of man in the bourgeois city.<sup>48</sup> Finally, it must also be remembered that Léon Bloy was present indirectly through the impact of Jacques Maritain who, as we have seen in Chapter 4, was part of the France Libre presence in Québec during the Second World War. Bloy was godfather to Maritain and his wife Raïssa, being instrumental in their conversion to Catholicism.<sup>49</sup> They sponsored a republication of Bloy's *Le salut par les juifs*, and this book was the subject of Paul Desmarins' *La remontée vers l'absolu*, published by Beauchemin in 1957. This book's discussion of the status of the Jewish people in Bloy's oeuvre provides an exegesis of Bloy's *apologia* which proclaimed common cause with the Jewish people as a people condemned by the Catholic tradition. Bloy adopted the Jews in the name of destroying the Catholic hierarchy. This exegesis, taking its meaning in relation to Québec's conflicted understanding of its Catholic identity, could only be framed by the virulent

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<sup>48</sup> See Stanislas Fumet, *La Poésie au rendez-vous: Baudelaire, Apulée, Edgar Poe, Louise Labé, Pouchkine, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Ernest Hello, Léon Bloy* (Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1967).

<sup>49</sup> See Léon Bloy, *Lettre à ses filleuls, Jacques Maritain et Pierre Van Der Meer de Walcheren. Préface de Jacques Maritain* (Paris, Stock, Delamain et Boutelleau, 1928); Jacques Maritain, *Quelques pages sur Léon Bloy* (Paris, Cahiers de la Quinzine, 1927); Raïssa Maritain, *Les aventures de la Grâce* (New York, 1944; Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1949).

anti-semitism prevalent in Québec since the 1920s.<sup>50</sup> Bloy provided a wide framework for the re-examination of religious identity in 1950s Québec, with far-reaching influence on concepts of society and politics. Above all, his works were being widely read and discussed. He was being read by those who sought to undo the restrictions of the mainstream Catholic clergy, and who sought a re-engagement with the social agendas of a society moving to a secular (although still faith-based) model. Bloy's fiercely anticlerical Catholicism was but one of the many radical avenues of change available, and relevant, in the 1950s. His excoriating pamphlets and his novels addressed themselves to a devout suffering, to hopelessness, to misery and begging as a way of undoing the trappings of a prostituted, fallen existence that needed to be purified in order to attain grace. In this world, man is outcast, fallen, murderer, the truly needy of redemption: he is Cain, not the favoured son Abel. He is the protagonist of Bloy's 1886 novel, *Le désespéré*, Caïn Marchenoir – Cain Blackfoot, Cain walk-in-darkness.

In all of Robert LaPalme's work on Maurice Duplessis, the image that comes closest to participating in this Bloyen conception of man and the City is the February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1958 *Un valentin au grand Maurice*. We can now reread the caption for its consonance with Bloy: "Ta peur de Pierre, Jean, Jacques te fait faire des embardées": - your fear of Pierre [Des Marais], Jean [Drapeau], Jacques [Hébert], forces you to do about-turns - "pour te défendre tu attaques comme un *désespéré*" [emphasis added]. In order to defend yourself, you attack like the forsaken one. Open mouthed, perhaps hungry, ferocious, the image of

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<sup>50</sup> By 1955, André Laurendeau, who as a young man had joined in the denunciation of Jewish commerce in Montreal as part of his Jeune-Canada fervour, had so far abandoned his early anti-semitic world view that he was a cherished guest of the Montreal Cercle juif de langue française. See also Naïm Kattan, "Juifs et Canadiens-français", in *Études françaises* vol 37 no 3 (2001): 101-109.

Duplessis appears to answer to some of the opening passages of *Le désespéré* : “Ah ! le couteau eût mieux valu, sans doute, le rudimentaire couteau du chourineur filial [...] Vous m'avez vu [...] coiffé d'une ordure cylindrique, dénué de vêtements, de souliers, de tout enfin, excepté de l'apéritive espérance.”<sup>51</sup> If Duplessis's is not a strict re-enactment of the role of Caïn Marchenoir, who has just killed his father as *Le désespéré* opens, the association to the Cain figure is nonetheless productive. Throughout his reign, Duplessis was associated with the Ungava district, the so-called Terre de Caïn in Québec history. In killing Abel, Cain destroys him, but drives out God as well. In effect, this drawing might be simply the most searing accusation against Maurice Duplessis's all too constant invocation of the relationship between himself and the almighty through his manipulation of the Church. The Church was itself at work, as Warren and Mounier have shown, undoing the unholy alliance of clericalism and state. Many in the clergy were at work fashioning from within Québec society a path that they felt was true to the Church at mid-century. It must reform itself from within and bestow the responsibility for doing the Church work into the hands of each lay person. LaPalme's drawing in *Vrai* of 1957-58 was the occasion for making manifest a Bloyen critique in the service of the personalist transformation of society.

Duplessis' arrogance and appropriation of Church had indeed risked fusing leader, party, political system and faith, in the name of a defence of the very liberal capitalism which the Church had also been attempting to successfully critique and transform since *Rerum Novarum*, that papal instrument of social change which Duplessis had torn asunder, as LaPalme had shown as early as 1949. LaPalme succeeded, in the *Valentin au grand*

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<sup>51</sup> Léon Bloy, *Le désespéré* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1933): 9.

*Maurice*, in facing down Duplessis's myth by relegating it to, and identifying it directly with, that of the primordial biblical outcast.

This visual virulence was exceptional in LaPalme's work. Perhaps there was no need or no way to repeat it. Neither in his work for *Vrai*, for *Le Devoir* or later for *La Presse* did LaPalme ever return to so ferocious a treatment. *Un valentin au grand Maurice* was perhaps not instrumental in releasing a Bloyen approach into Québec polemics of this period, although it does seem to partake, by its content and the context in which it appears, in a complex moment to which the legacy of Léon Bloy contributed. This was the imagery which Olivar Asselin might have imagined as possible in his own journals, in *L'Ordre* and *La Renaissance*, but which he could only seize in its potential, and encourage in the work of his friend Claude-Henri Grignon.

## **5. The end of LaPalme's Age of Duplessis**

On Saturday January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1959, *Le Devoir* announced that Robert LaPalme was leaving the newspaper after seven years' service to join the staff of *La Presse*. The announcement presented an excerpt from LaPalme's resignation letter. He expressed his regret at leaving a newspaper where he had earned his spurs and enjoyed the most complete freedom, having collaborated with "pleasure, pride and liberty." His letter reads as an elegy for the truly critical spirit which had sometimes made him severe and cruel towards authority.

“Je crois pouvoir me justifier en faisant remarquer que, de bonne foi, ne dessinant sous la dictée de personne, j’ai refusé de vénérer nos Batista qui se prostituent et qui trahissent pour avoir le plaisir orgueilleux de gouverner. [C’est au] DEVOIR que j’ai connu la totale liberté. La liberté d’être libéral, conservateur, psd ou action-civique ou contre tout ça selon la dictée de ma conscience politique.”<sup>52</sup>

The editors gave LaPalme their blessing, thanking him for the pleasure they had had in working with him, extolling his unparalleled capacity as a caricaturist in French Canada, indeed in Canada altogether. His gaiety, his humour, his irony and his occasional vitriol had led most readers to consult his caricatures before looking at the rest of the newspaper. His departure would be a loss. LaPalme’s last drawing for the paper gave no hint of the predominant theme of all his *Devoir* years, Maurice Duplessis. LaPalme’s final Duplessis drawings for the newspaper were simply instances in an ongoing saga, the apogee of which had been reached in the 1957-58 drawings we have already surveyed.<sup>53</sup>

In his final weeks at the paper, LaPalme had continued to exploit humour that ensued from the Natural Gas scandal of June 1958. In *Le souffleur/Ça marche au gaz naturel à la législature*, LaPalme conflated the rank odour of the Premier’s exhalation with the legend of his control of the National Assembly through his vocal interruption of, and whispering of lines, to his submissive MNAs, a practice memorably described in the acerbic reminiscences of Georges-Emile Lapalme.

Sa faiblesse tenait à son besoin de parler de tout et pour tous les ministres [...] Chaque jour, il revivait sa première victoire et s’appuyait sur les débris qu’il avait vus d’un parti libéral littéralement haché par les coups qu’il lui avait portés en 1936. Sans cesse, comme s’il eut craint un retour à la vie de ce qui était mort, il

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<sup>52</sup> “LaPalme quitte *Le Devoir*”. *Le Devoir*, vol X no X, 31 January 1959: 4. The reference to the ousted leader of Cuba came at a time when Fidel Castro was something of a darling in the North American media. Castro’s expulsion of an American-backed régime had all too many promising overtones for the anti-Duplessis forces in Québec.

ramenait les spectres d'un passé vieux d'au moins 20 ans pour les tuer encore et il s'adressait à nous qui n'avions pas été là au temps des désastres en nous accusant d'avoir été les auteurs de ce qu'il avait détruit.<sup>54</sup>

Duplessis the *Souffleur*, the prompter, speaks; but his foul breath overwhelms (Figure 5-74).

A month later, on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1959, the rotten stench of an egg newly laid by Duplessis the hen was noticed by "Baptiste", watching alongside mademoiselle Concordia (the motto of Montreal being 'Concordia Salus'). The Duplessis government had laboured to bring forth legislation reorganizing Montreal's municipal structure, but the new egg of metropolitan government was no sooner laid than it was held to be rotten. The antecedents for such a gag were legion, not least in Canadian caricature of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As in *Le souffleur*..., references to odour and the putrid permeate drawings, whose *mise-en-scène* is perhaps not wholly original. But the consistent conjuring of decay and decrepitude is no less important for this. This is a stock criticism of any political régime. It has been in power too long, it is in decline and decomposition. It has been corrupted, in a bodily sense. For years, LaPalme had visited this criticism on Duplessis's body. His psychological caricature seems, in these latter Duplessis drawings, to be less invested in humoristic invention than in the qualities of the Premier's face that are expressive of age, fatigue, and the grotesque. The other graphic elements of each of these drawings are more and more summarily presented. LaPalme set aside some of the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid. We have seen his stalwart espousal of Liberal Party programmes and values. His "psd" and "action-civique" alliances referred to two nascent political parties of the 1950s. The Parti social démocratique was formed in the wake of the 1956 Liberal defeat at the provincial election, to provide a rallying point for left-wing forces in Québec that would be distinct from the centralizing-federalist (and therefore discredited) CCF and its provincial wing.

<sup>54</sup> *Le vent de l'oubli*: 166.

virtuoso organisation of shape, and the undulating or geometric play of solid black and white masses with which his style had become distinctive over the course of his career. But the increasingly simple choice of compositional elements was simply one of LaPalme's longstanding graphic strategies.

He returned to one of his most characteristic approaches in this final month: the rebus. On seven occasions, he assembled a series of visual and textual puns to support ongoing commentaries that were part of *Le Devoir's* vision of the Premier. On December 22<sup>nd</sup>, he presented the riddle "Ile tente d'oeux fer terre part dé acte sion en lit belle" or "Il tente de faire taire par des actions en libelle" (Figure 5-75). This was the order issued by Duplessis to all the ministers implicated in the Natural Gas scandal: each must sue *Le Devoir* for one thousand dollars, thereby placing the matter *sub judice* and exempting from ministerial comment. Three of the rebuses were presented as contests. Find the answer (always supplied in the caption, or at the foot of the page), and send it in with twenty 'clippings' of one dollar, in order to receive a free subscription. Islands, horses, Duplessis' nose and sayings, crossed bones and saws, were all part of a recurring vocabulary presented in equally summary form. In his last Duplessis drawing for *Le Devoir*, and also his final rebus, three brief elements spell out *cor rruuup scions*. These were corruptions: 'Cor' the corn of an aching toe, 'rruuppp' the sound made by a deflating Duplessis head-balloon, 'scions' the five-letter answer offered by two *habitant* woodsmen. The Duplessis face-balloon provides a twist as the air escapes through the tip of the nose instead of through the nostrils. Perhaps the venom of the artist was leaking away as well. Between the depiction of gas and that of flatulence aflame, it may be that

LaPalme had reached the limits of his own ability to push his newspaper's sense of decorum.

Once again Georges-Émile LaPalme's memoirs retrospectively afford a sense that the *fin de régime* goes with the *fin de l'homme*. Duplessis was memory itself; with his passing, much would be consigned to what Lapalme termed *Le vent de l'oubli*.

Au crépuscule de sa vie rongé par le diabète, sa *mission* remplissait son existence de solitaire ne croyant qu'en lui-même. Tirer une bordée sur sa foi publiquement affichée, c'était se faire chasser dans la fosse aux serpents. [...] Il me reste tout un lot de ses histoires d'hommes à femmes ou de femmes à hommes; sous ses doigts, l'ancien Québec, en particulier, s'éveillait à un érotisme que nos sociologues prétendent n'avoir jamais existé [...].

In his own time, Georges-Émile Lapalme had recognized how Duplessis perpetually traded in rollicking word-play, in ironic and carnivalesque representations. The personal and the political were indeed fused in Duplessis's imagined world: but the personal was physical too. Robert LaPalme's countless allusion to the functions of body in his caricatures may have seemed outlandish attacks. But they were never very far from a conception of the national order that started with base human physicality, an astonishing conception that Georges-Émile Lapalme recognized all too well:

Tout y passait, le vrai, le faux, la médisance, la calomnie, les témoignages et les on-dit. Parmi ceux qui défilaient devant lui, aux comités, il s'en trouvait toujours qui soulevaient dans sa mémoire un conte à double sens qu'il me glissait en sourdine pendant qu'avec son stylo et de sa grosse écriture, il corrigeait lui-même, avec une application d'écadier, les lois futures dont certaines se traduiraient par des actes de spoliation de droits particuliers ou publics. Quoique peu porté vers la croyance des racontars, je ne pouvais m'empêcher d'établir des points de repère entre son comportement actuel et ce qui n'était, pour moi, faute de preuve, qu'une légende. Avec le temps, cherchant à me l'expliquer, je lui trouvais, à côté de cet



intérêt certain pour les jeux de l'amour chez les autres, une soif inextinguible de connaître la vie privée de tout le monde. Et il la connaissait en voyeur [...]. Lui, captant tous les échos des vies, se créait une psychologie des hommes en ramassant les petits faits comme l'avocat s'appuie sur une jurisprudence multiple avant de déposer ses conclusions. C'est de ces connaissances démultipliées que partaient les tentacules de son absolutisme; les ventouses aspiraient tout et partout parce qu'il possédait toute la géographie politique et humaine du Québec, tous les pions, toutes les têtes couronnées. La province, c'était une multitude de visages dont il connaissait les tics.<sup>55</sup>

On Monday February 2nd, the position of daily caricaturist at *Le Devoir* was assumed by Normand Hudon, a good friend of LaPalme's. When LaPalme had taken a sabbatical in 1953-54, he had recommended Hudon, then staff cartoonist for the 'yellow' paper *Allô-Police*.<sup>56</sup> Together, they had starred with Jean Duceppe in the news comedy programme *Ma ligne maligne* on Radio Canada television in 1956-57.<sup>57</sup> They often drew one another (Figure 5-76). Hudon's career trajectory was quite different from LaPalme's. By 1959, he had published two collections of his caricatures. The first, *J'ai mauvaise mine* (a pun, "mine" signifying facial expression and the lead of a pencil) appeared in 1954. It gathered together drawings, of prisoners and their guards, which had appeared in the notorious and very successful "yellow" rag *Allô-Police*.<sup>58</sup> The second, *La tête la*

<sup>55</sup> *Le vent de l'oubli* : 252- 256.

<sup>56</sup> In his preface to Hudon's 1961 collection entitled *À la potence*, Gérard Filion recalled: "Il fallait donc remplacer LaPalme. Ce n'était pas facile. Il était à cette époque en pleine verve anti-duplessiste; son coup de crayon était mordant; ses légendes étaient dévastatrices. "Je connais, me dit LaPalme, un grand garçon qui a du talent, Normand Hudon." Lui ou un autre, je n'avais pas le choix, car les caricaturistes ne créent pas d'embouteillages au Canada français [...] Deuxième fugue de LaPalme. *La Presse* lui offre une retraite dorée. Comment résister à l'apaisement de l'âge mûr. Les bourgeois les plus rangés ne sont-ils pas d'anciens révolutionnaires [...] Mais il y a le lecteur qui est de caractère sérieux et d'humeur légèrement morose. Pour lui, la caricature c'est un sous-genre, un déchet de l'art. Elle se classe au niveau du journalisme jaune. Une caricature dans *Le Devoir* c'est une profanation. L'audace devient un crime, quand le trait se vrille dans la peau d'un homme qu'on admire ou qu'on respecte. Le nez de Duplessis, la trogne de Camillien Houde [...] c'est autant de sacrilèges." Filion also admits that one of the pleasures of the collection will be in discovering caricatures that had not appeared in his newspaper, "parce que la direction du *Devoir*, exerçant la plus impitoyable dictature, les a censurés." Gérard Filion, "L'art de faire rire ou grimacer" in Normand Hudon, *À la potence* (Montréal : Éditions à la page, 1961) : np.

<sup>57</sup> LaPalme (1997) : 71.

*première*, appeared in 1958. This was a collection of portrait caricatures. Most had appeared at *Le Petit Journal*.<sup>59</sup> Hudon had perfected a spidery line that blended intense character and physiognomic observation with an apparently careless execution. Taken together with his full name-and-surname signature, all written out in lower case cursive letters, his drawing style seemed at first glance style-less. In contrast to the sophisticated line perfected by LaPalme since the 1930s, Hudon's was almost unfinished. Its deceptive naïveté made it seem as if someone had tampered with the drawing, covering it in unexpected sprinklings of vitriol.

This was evident from the very first of Hudon's drawings of Maurice Duplessis to appear in *Le Devoir*, on Monday February 2<sup>nd</sup>. In *Il ne peut plus prendre toutes les LICENCES qu'il prenait*, the Premier is so angry that he "pête le feu" – farts fire – as he arthritically staggers with the help of his cane into Union Nationale treasurer Gerry Martineau's office, to demand the sum of \$33,123.53 (Figure 5-77). This was the amount in personal damages, plus interest, awarded against the Premier in the outcome of a thirteen-year long landmark case in Canadian civil rights history. Duplessis was personally liable for having wronged a supporter of the Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>60</sup> The flames trailing behind his

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<sup>58</sup> Normand Hudon, *J'ai mauvaise mine* (Saint-Hyacinthe, Québec: Éditions de l'Autorité, 1954). *Allo-Police* had an ambiguous place in 1950s culture. It relied on sensational and profusely illustrated coverage of crime and prostitution. "*Allo-Police* s'intéresse surtout aux crimes, aux accidents, aux hétacombes, aux meurtres, aux viols, à la pègre, aux drames passionnels partout au Québec." *La presse québécoise des origines à nos jours* (vol 8) : 237-238. This made it the type of newspaper disliked so intensely by *Vrai* and the Ligue d'action civique, although it did proclaim that its purpose was "de mettre davantage en garde les jeunes comme les adultes contre les risques que comporte l'abandon d'une conduite saine et morale."

<sup>59</sup> Normand Hudon acknowledges Jean-Charles Harvey and Pierre-Paul Lafortune of *Le Petit Journal* on page 319. Although there is good recent material on the career of Jean-Charles Harvey, a study remains to be done of his own distinctive choice of caricaturists throughout his career. At *Le Jour* alone (1937-1946), he worked with John Collins (1917 - ), Harry Meyerovitch (1910-2004) and Robert LaPalme.

coat tails are immediately reminiscent of French revolutionary caricature, particularly Jacques-Louis David's 1794 image of the English Government devil whose rear end, the face of George III, vomits flames and smoke (Figure 5-78).<sup>61</sup> Hudon's image resumed and furthered the ferocity that had marked LaPalme's caricatures at *Le Devoir* in 1957-58. After André Laurendeau's *Théorie du roi nègre* editorial of early July 1958, this force had begun to diminish, but Hudon brought a new sense of darkness that, ironically, came to full flower after Duplessis died. Some of Hudon's most powerful images dealt with a macabre, 'Undead' Duplessis who malevolently haunts the Union nationale. Hudon drew these Duplessis figures, in an oddly appropriate way, with unfinished patches of black ink whose edges are messy.

LaPalme inaugurated his *La Presse* residency on Monday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1959. At the "plus grand quotidien français de l'Amérique", he joined his oftentime collaborator Jean-Louis Gagnon, who had taken the reins of *La Presse* in 1958 with a mandate to reorganize and modernize its newsroom, its printing facilities and its political outlook.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> The story is comprehensively told in Sandra Djwa's biography of Frank R. Scott: 305-317. The award upheld, after Duplessis's appeals, a 1951 Supreme Court ruling against Duplessis in the celebrated Roncarelli case. In 1946, Maurice Duplessis had personally cancelled the liquor license of a prosperous restaurant owner who had provided bail to many members of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The sect, highly active in Quebec since 1933, was strongly opposed to the Catholic establishment, which it named the "Whore of Babylon", in part because of German Catholic Church support for Adolf Hitler. The Jehovah's witness movement was thus anathema to the province's Catholic establishment. It had been declared illegal by Ernest Lapointe in 1940, a ban which lasted until 1943. Maurice Duplessis took special exception to the movement, using the Padlock and anti-sedition laws to high levels of religious persecution. Scott had led the legal defense of Roncarelli since 1947.

<sup>61</sup> Although tantalizing, this link is presently speculative. One of the bibliographic references ascribed to this image in Claudette Houde's *Images of the French Revolution* (Québec: Musée du Québec, 1989) may have been available in Montreal at this time: the 1859 article by Baron de Vinck "Sur les transformations subies par les gravures pendant la Révolution française," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 1859: 191-192. The 1909 inventory of de Vinck's collection of caricature, *Un siècle d'histoire de France par l'estampe*, (1770-1871: collection de Vinck: inventaire analytique, Bibliothèque nationale, Département des estampes Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1909-) is in the collection of the Université du Québec à Montréal.

In his editorial of the same day, Gagnon addressed the changes taking place at the newspaper as it sought to be at the “service du peuple” and to be a “grand journal d’information”. The paper would be independent, but not neutral: it would align itself with progress, justice, dignity and the honour of man. Readers would find signed articles on the editorial page. One contributor was directly named: Robert LaPalme. “[...] certains se sont demandés dans quelle mesure Robert LaPalme restera libre de ses pinceaux. Qu’on se rassure: si, dès le premier jour, Robert LaPalme a voulu rendre un hommage mérité à son prédécesseur, dès demain, il reviendra à ses têtes de turc!”<sup>63</sup>

The predecessor was Albéric Bourgeois, who had served fifty years with the paper, from 1905 until his death in 1955. Throughout this time, caricature had been a permanent component of *La Presse*’s daily fare. Its function derived rather more from the American example of the daily humorous imagery of political cartoon and comic strips. As we have seen, literature critic and historian Camille Roy decried this as early as 1905. Bourgeois was the prolific author of daily comic strips, of the weekly *En roulant ma boule* illustrated column and of editorial page caricatures. Many of his creations had spilled over into books, stage performances and songs. LaPalme indeed paid tribute to his predecessor in his first drawing for his new paper, *Hommage à Bourgeois* (Figure 5-79). LaPalme drew himself in the foreground, in the act of drawing Baptiste and Catherine, Bourgeois’s longstanding characters, who tower over the drawn LaPalme while an aghast Bourgeois looks on. LaPalme combined Bourgeois’s controlled linear approach, imitated

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<sup>62</sup> Gagnon discusses his time at *La Presse* in *Les apostasies, tome II : Les dangers de la vertu* (Montréal : La Presse, 1986) [hereafter Gagnon, *Apostasies II*] :432-451.

<sup>63</sup> “Le service du peuple” [editorial by Jean-Louis Gagnon]. *La Presse*, vol 75 no 92, 2 February 1959: 4.

lovingly in the figure of Baptiste, with his own undulating, sensuous line. His drawing encroaches on Catherine as he completes the outline of her left arm in his own undulating manner. Catherine alludes directly to the stylistic differences between the two artists:

“Baptiste! R’garde môé don’la ligne qu’i m’fait!” The dense black shadows cast by the two figures also recall the elder caricaturist’s typical organisation of shallow space.

Baptiste and Catherine had long been Bourgeois’ foils, his vehicles to express an understanding of issues at home and around the world. With this tribute, LaPalme both opened up and closed the references to his predecessor. The *têtes de turc* to which he turned the following day predominantly reflected a preoccupation with international affairs that was in keeping with the role sought by Jean-Louis Gagnon for *La Presse*. Most significantly, and surprisingly, there are no caricatures by LaPalme to mark Duplessis’s death in September 1959. The purpose of invective, on this front at least, was left to *Le Devoir*.

The adventure of *La Presse* lasted only for two years. In 1961, Jean-Louis Gagnon left with several of his star employees, LaPalme among them, to start *Le Nouveau Journal*, a ground-breaking newspaper. “La Presse,” remembered Gagnon, who had taken its helm in 1958 and transformed it into a modern newspaper, “avait été une rampe de lancement. Nous nous y étions fait la main en étoffant, entre autres, la chronique de politique étrangère et en nous engageant dans le journalisme d’enquête. Des éditoriaux qui donnaient souvent à réfléchir, les caricatures signées LaPalme, et, avant tout, une tribune des lecteurs mis en appétit de liberté nous avaient permis d’agir sur l’opinion publique.”<sup>64</sup> *Le Nouveau Journal* did not live to its first anniversary. By 1962, LaPalme’s career as a

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<sup>64</sup> Gagnon, *Apostasies* II : 455-456.

daily caricaturist was over. He continued to supply editorial caricatures for *Le magazine Maclean*, among others, often in illustration of articles by André Laurendeau. LaPalme's career after *Le Devoir* and the battles against Maurice Duplessis effectively lie outside the scope of this study. As we have already seen, LaPalme became a civil servant, working in the municipal world of mayor Jean Drapeau with whom he had been involved throughout the 1950s through his contributions to the weekly political journal *Vrai* founded and directed by Jacques Hébert. When LaPalme left *Vrai* in January 1959 as he was about to go to *La Presse* from *Le Devoir*, Hébert thanked his staunch collaborator:

Pour fonder un journal comme VRAI dans la province de Québec il faut, soit dit en toute modestie, passablement d'audace. Par exemple, il en fallait pour demander au plus illustre de nos caricaturistes d'associer son nom à une aventure journalistique qui aurait pu être sans lendemain. [...] la direction de LA PRESSE nous assure que Robert LaPalme restera 'libre de ses pinceaux'. Voilà bien ce que le 'plus grand quotidien d'Amérique' nous a annoncé de plus sensationnel depuis sa fondation! Après avoir dénoncé pendant quatre ans les lâchetés de LA PRESSE, nous serions mal venus de ne pas nous réjouir sincèrement de la révolution qui s'y opère, révolution qui permettra à des centaines de milliers de citoyens de profiter chaque jour de l'humour impitoyable, délectation réservée depuis longtemps aux seuls lecteurs du DEVOIR et de VRAI.<sup>65</sup>

In Québec's visual culture, the death of Maurice Duplessis functioned in the same manner as had the death of a great destabilizing enemy in other caricature traditions. It came with the need for a quieter aftermath, for amnesia, a redirection of energy.

LaPalme's increasingly virulent caricature of the 1950s was like the outrageous graphic satire of Georgian England, exemplifying the apparently limitless boundaries of political speech and invective in popular discourse. But there were limits of different kinds, in terms of approach and relevance. Robert LaPalme's career as a caricaturist did not long outlast the era of Maurice Duplessis. Although he was identified with the élite that had so

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<sup>65</sup> Jacques Hébert, "Révolution à La Presse. Robert LaPalme reste libre..." *Vrai*, February 14th, 1959 : 10

assiduously prepared the future for Québec society, the tenor of his particular type of graphic satire fairly quickly fell out of fashion. More brutal and far less overtly sophisticated graphic styles became de rigueur in the francophone press of 1960s Québec, as witnessed by the drawings of LaPalme's colleagues. There was Roland Berthiaume, or Berthio, who worked alongside LaPalme at *Vrai* and later at *Le Nouveau Journal*, succeeding him at *La Presse* and at *Le Devoir*. There was Normand Hudon who followed him at *Le Devoir* and later *La Presse*; and there was Jean-Pierre Girerd at *La Presse*. They promoted the aesthetics of the scrawl, the graffiti and the quick-punch line prevalent in postwar advertising illustration, experimental and commercial animated cartoons of Europe and anglophone North America. LaPalme's work had negotiated transfers between "high" and "low" art practices, in a line that emerged from the international celebrity caricature and French polemical cartoons of the 1920s and 1930s. It had held a place in the definitions of artistic modernity in Québec up until the 1940s, retaining an ironic position towards the emergence of abstraction and non-figuration by virtue of its own participation in the evolution of these modernist practices. Above all, as we have seen, it placed the values associated with visual representational and modernist satire firmly within an overarching critique of the reactionary in Québec society. LaPalme thereby helped to support the alliance of cultural modernism to an anti-reactionary position in his society. This was by no means a given. Elsewhere in Western cultural history, modernism and reaction had been easily fused. 1930s Québec had itself been open to such an aesthetic-political union. LaPalme had succeeded in forging such a union himself in his consistent alliance with anti-Duplessis forces. His stylistic form and political text were allied in the making of a mythical order that could face down the one

created by Duplessis. With the death of the *Chef*, a death long foretold and rehearsed in LaPalme's caricature, there was an end to the power of the symbolic attack so closely identified with LaPalme's own leadership.

The battle between Duplessis and LaPalme was one between mythic representations. As we have seen in the testimony of Georges-Emile Lapalme, Duplessis's hold on the political life of Québec, down to its smallest detail, had served to transform him into myth in his own time. In the pages that follow, having completed the story of LaPalme's construction of caricatural myth, we consider the deeper functions of the ironic and the satiric in the mythic processes that Québec required in order to transform itself. We will see throughout these pages that the attack on Duplessis was also a way of addressing and releasing the processes of change that were attendant on Québec's fundamental identity as a francophone and Catholic *collectivité*—the very elements which Duplessis, in his time and since, has been held to embody.

When LaPalme said farewell to *Le Devoir*, he gave thanks for having been able to learn to give the full measure of himself. But *Vrai* had also allowed him to be excessive. Having carefully built a mythic Duplessis, a long-running character who had, since 1943, aged into an imagined parallel existence, LaPalme had prefigured since 1955 the decay which must finally win over Maurice Duplessis as no political party seemed able to do. He had also revisualised Duplessis into the fundamental mythic order underpinning Québec's Catholic culture.



## **Chapter Six**

### **Conclusion**

As we have seen throughout this study, Robert LaPalme helped to redefine the limits of representation in his society. We linked his explorations to the underlying heritage of ideas that made Québec a vital battleground between representations. By analyzing materials in newspapers and in original documents, in memoirs and in historiographical reassessments, we have been able to present the towering presence of Duplessis as the emblem of his era's ideologies through the eyes of many of the principal journalists, writers, artists, publishers and politicians who worked in the shadow of this powerful presence. We have been able to revisit the accepted historical record of his defining influence in all aspects of Québec history, and we have made a case for the necessary integration of studies in graphic satire in such re-readings.

As a result, LaPalme's visual representation of the "age of Duplessis" was concerned with more than his party's ideology, his personalization of power and patronage, his representation of his era and his people to themselves, his longstanding grip on the province, his personal control of the nation's resources and laws, or his brokering of the compact between Church and State. LaPalme's overriding subject was, instead, Duplessis's body. The latter appeared to be – and was almost always signalled by – Duplessis's nose, without doubt a comic entity in its own right, one that gave rise to great inventiveness on the part of LaPalme. But the nose was but a synecdoche of the

body: the suspiciously asexual, easily re-gendered, changing, ageing, faltering, decaying and dying body. Caricature was best able to represent the face and the body, for their self-reflexive representation was its purpose, and satirical caricature was the most powerful way of making them emblematic of the conflicts of Duplessis's age.

Caricature and graphic satire thus continually called into question a dialectic between the individual body and its historically marked identity. For this reason, the remainder of this concluding chapter is organized to articulate a programme for studies in Québec caricature along lines that emerge from and synthesize these two principal research preoccupations.

Our first path, disciplinary and prescriptive, concerns the further development of historical contextualisation. We outline a set of research initiatives – monographic, historical, geographic and thematic in aspect – which follow on both from the work accomplished in this thesis, and from the earlier work in this field that we enumerated in our introduction (see Chapter One, note 23).

In our second path, we revisit the satiric Duplessis body as a starting point for the re-examination of the satirical visual image and the purposes of artistic representation in Québec. A number of questions over identity arise from the densely layered meanings carried by caricatures and graphic satires. We propose to examine these independently of our governing chronological sequence and structure, through a set of cross-readings.

Our third and final path addresses the mythic structure created through LaPalme's work and ties it to recent historiographic investigations of the functions of myth in the period leading up to the Quiet Revolution. In this final section, we speak of the prefigurative mythic function of caricature, a satirical, figurative artform deeply embedded in the representational conflicts of its own time.

### **1. Proposals for Future Research: Caricature Studies and Québec Histories of Art**

In this section we propose avenues for future monographic and comparative studies of caricaturists, both within Québec's tradition and in the context of international developments in caricature. We also consider studies of the institutions of caricature history in Québec and Canada.

Monographic studies in historical Québec caricature, as we have seen, are few. Research by Yves Chèvrefils on John Henry Walker, by Nicole Allard on Jean-Baptiste Côté and Hector Berthelot can be grouped together with our earlier work on Henri Julien and with the present study. Studies would be possible based on the extensive archival holdings of original works or papers by A. G. Racey (Trent University, uncatalogued drawings) and Albéric Bourgeois (Bibliothèque et Archives nationale du Québec and Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, drawings and papers). For a historical period that overlaps with the beginning of the 1960s, the work of Roland Berthiaume (Berthio) and Normand Hudon, already alluded to in Chapter Five, would allow us to measure the conscious choice of

visual language that signals itself as non-sophisticated as a strategy in satire and as an exemplar of a wider set of new cultural values.

Comparative studies would usefully combine studies of caricaturists with those of other visual artists, performers and satirists. We have linked the work of LaPalme to the productions of his contemporaries, which have been drawn into this study as necessary. It will also be important to place LaPalme in the wider artistic contexts in which both French- and English- speaking artists participated as self-identified members of an avant-garde. Work comparable to that done in this thesis needs to be applied to the anglophone press and the to the progressive circles of Frank and Marian Scott, Norman Bethune and other leaders of the progressive political and artistic circles of Montréal and Québec City.

There are in any case many crossovers in English Montreal. For example, Racey was at *La Patrie* before joining the *Star*. The tradition of caricature in the English Montréal community before 1960 also needs documentation and study for, among others, Harry Meyerovitch, John Collins and Ed McNally. Most important, once monographic studies are completed, will be comparative investigations of the development of the graphic satirical impulse across English, French and allophone communities. The relationship between graphic satire and other satire forms in the eras of vaudeville, nightclubs, radio, television, and latterly in manifestations such as the *Just for Laughs* festival and museum, points to intermedial studies, as does the presence of satire in disciplines such as printmaking (Albert Dumouchel, Pierre Ayot) and performance in Québec.

National and international comparative studies would better contextualize Québec caricature studies. Comparative studies of practitioners and periods of caricature in other Canadian provinces and regions, and then with instances in other national traditions, would enable work such as Carman Cumming's study of John Wilson Bengough to be re-read, for example, in light of the work on Berthelot and Julien. Given the connections between Québec's and other national traditions that we enumerated in Chapters Two and Four, projects can be imagined that would place Québec practices at a crossroads between those of France, Great Britain, the United States, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina. Among these, a leading priority is a large-scale, comparative inventory of caricature production and circulation in France and Québec between 1870 and 1939 (with systematic investigation into the reception of French publications in Québec), for both English- and French- language caricaturists. A comparable assessment of the circulation of English-language publications from Great Britain and the United States is also required.

Following Gérard Bouchard's investigation of the role of myth in what he terms "new collectivities" around the world, and with the 1941-45 *War Cartoons and Caricatures of the British Commonwealth* exhibition in mind, research projects that examine Québec productions alongside those of other former colonial societies (or "new collectivities") could then integrate the more complete dimension of mythic development that we have argued is observable as one of the fundamental "texts" of a national caricature tradition. By the same token, there is much to be gained from other selection criteria. Pre-1960 Québec witnessed tremendous revolutionary change in the dismantling of colonial

societies, and frequently placed its own position in revolutionary contexts. Troubled associations to blackness call to mind the cultural imperatives of *negritude* and the satiric-critical impulse in the francophone nations of Africa. Comparative caricature studies with a pan-Atlantic focus or that include Indian Ocean or Oceanic communities should be instructive for the tracing of native/European dynamics in the formulation of satiric individual and group identity representations. Returning to a key theme of the present study, it may well be of use to compare caricature productions in twentieth-century nations in which the dynamics of modernism and Catholic identity might bear on caricature production. In this instance, the visual traditions of France, Québec, Mexico, Brazil and Ireland, with attention paid to English Catholic press in Canada, the United States and Great Britain, may help articulate the relation of satiric imagery to personalist, reactionary and apocalyptic and liberation theology movements in Catholic communities.

The official instances that adopt the values articulated by caricature also require study. LaPalme's founding of the Galerie municipale, his association with the France Libre movement and his integration into the cultural projects of Canadian diplomacy, his enlistment as a Québec voice by *Canadian Art* magazine and his appearance before the Massey Commission hearings that led to the formation of the Canada Council, all presaged or were simply the first logical instance of Canadian governments' long-delayed recognition of the role it could be play in developing Canadian culture. From Olivar Asselin to Pierre Elliot Trudeau, identity and its representation, satiric or not, were at stake.

In this regard, the institutions that set agendas for the research, collection and exhibition of caricature are also of great importance. The National Gallery of Canada, Library and Archives Canada, the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, the McCord Museum of Canadian History, the Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Ontario have been among the principal institutions to collect caricature, to undertake, collate and disseminate research on caricature collections, and to circulate original caricatures in the twentieth century. It is important to gauge when and how status was either conferred or withheld from caricature in these institutions' histories, according to changes in collecting and exhibitions policy and resources.

The historiography of Québec caricature also belongs to this institutional approach. Instances in the development of a critical vocabulary for caricature need to be enumerated and described, and the ebb and flow of the relative validity accorded to caricature as a serious critical subject needs to be assessed.

## **2. Cross-readings of identity in LaPalme's Duplessis caricatures**

Bertrand Tillier's analysis of the caricature of France's Third Republic caricature – a vast production that is among the foundations of LaPalme's work and of his critical reception – yields an apposite insight:

Le corps et le visage deviennent, en écho à la personnalisation extrême du pouvoir, les supports symboliques et iconographiques des multiples accusations et dénonciations que prodigue la caricature. Le corps devient un lieu de fracture physique, morale et politique, avec le but de déconsidérer l'individu représenté, son part ou le groupe auquel il appartient. En exposant le corps et les traits des

victimes, les caricaturistes opèrent un amalgame entre les caractères privés et publics, permettant ainsi de multiplier les attaques sur tous les fronts.

On n'a pas assez, à mon sens, souligné les rapports étroits existant entre la caricature et le corps, si l'on considère – à l'instar des victimes – que la première constitue généralement une insulte pour le second, soit par sa représentation, soit par la trivialité d'une mise en situation. Or dans la charge comme dans l'insulte, le corps occupe une place fondamentale. [L'opposition à la caricature] souligne le caractère grossier, vulgaire, obscène, pornographique, scatologique et insultant de ces images. [Les mécanismes langagiers et expressifs de la caricature] procèdent de la critique comme injure. [...] Les linguistes ont depuis longtemps analysé l'hyperprésence du corps et de ses fonctions physiologiques dans l'injure et l'insulte, celui-ci étant le siège unique de toutes nos sensations et de notre affectivité.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout our study these categories and issues have repeatedly been raised by LaPalme's caricatures. At the opening of this chapter we saw the body as the foremost vehicle for LaPalme's political satire. In a Bakhtinian sense, LaPalme's images are part of the carnivalesque reversal of power relations through political and corporeal abasement. Bertrand Tillier describes a critical tradition of comic theory of the body that is even more closely linked to the Baudelairean notions of *comique absolu* and the poetry of the carcass, the necessary *charogne*. The redemptive destructiveness of Léon Bloy, operating on the body, transmitted via Olivar Asselin and Claude-Henri Grignon, was, as we have seen, formative for LaPalme's generation. Tillier articulates the notion of "fracture", which concisely evokes the violence inflicted on the body by caricature, in order to represent the violence operated onto personal and group identity by conflicts in society (or between societies). Language was present in almost every type of identity marking that afflicted the body, whether racial or gender identity, skin colour, sexuality, growth and aging, or decay and death. But there was an added element for the divided

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<sup>1</sup> Bertrand Tillier, *La République: La Caricature Politique En France, 1870-1914* (Paris, CNRS éditions, 1997) : 73.



communities of Québec. The “fracture physique, morale et politique” to which the LaPalme/Duplessis body was subject was also made through language. In the case of Québec, moreover, we can argue that the sense of “fracture” is embedded in the divided allegiances embodied, so to speak, in the conflicts of French and English communities.

For LaPalme, language is more than the presence of words or the presentation of his humour in French or English. Language is the field of written information, made up of headings and subheadings, of speeches quoted or present in balloons, of interfering inscriptions and texts that cross and pierce the visual space, as well as the written-page contexts in which the drawings were published. But the body is itself also extended into the field of language: physiognomic traits and graphic representations perform functions that endlessly recombine in a wider system. These operations end up playing repeatedly with the reader’s perception of the status of his or her own (French-Canadian or other) identity. We will see how LaPalme places the conflicts and crises of individual and political identity directly in both body and language. He does so in different ways according to the relative importance accorded to the individual or group as the (apparent) subject of his caricature. In our cross-readings, we will examine how LaPalme organizes identity markers through two main groupings: the first sees identity in ethnicity, operating through race, religion and nationality, often through recourse to spoken and written language; the second sees identity in the body, through sexuality, and through the aging, decay and death of the Duplessis body in particular. As will be clear, these two groupings are not separate from one another, and their unresolved tension returns us to the fundamental contradictions embodied and satirized by LaPalme’s caricature.

In this respect, LaPalme's treatment of ethnicity, for example, very soon harnesses markers of sexuality. Two images characteristic of this place the French-Canadian, Catholic Duplessis in other ethnic and religious contexts. In a caricature published only in LaPalme's bilingual 1950 retrospective book, Duplessis and his minister, Antonio Barré, visit the Young Men's Hebrew Association athletic facility in Montréal (Figure 6-1). In the representation of Duplessis's and Barré's bare chests, LaPalme makes certain choices that confirm the sense of an observed anatomy: the lines of Barré's ribcage, the chest hair, the carefully delineated nipple. Duplessis reminds Barré that he has only to keep his towel around his midriff for others present to be unaware that he is a Gentile. The reference to circumcision signals ethnic and religious difference sited on the penis. The resemblance of Duplessis's nose to a somewhat engorged but still flaccid and uncircumcised penis is the substitutive marker that makes these layered meanings visible. Its shape and size also connote the stereotypical hooked nose used in most anti-Semitic caricature. As we saw in Chapter Four, LaPalme more than once referred none too obliquely in his captions to the phallic role of Duplessis's nose. Here, phallic overtones are used to mark Gentile/Jewish difference in a double irony. They confirm dominant group preoccupations with minority group sexuality, often centred on genital size and other markings, and mark Duplessis as Jewish, or re-assign him the demonic role played by Jewish identity in anti-Semitic humour. These representations are swiftly drawn and emblematic, conveying the notion that LaPalme is excessively concerned with racial identification and ready to engage in a highly uncomfortable reference to physical intimacy.

Duplessis's nose has a different role in *Le totem du dernier Tory* of 1949 (Figure 5-9), where he is part of a phalanx of fascist figures – Adrien Arcand, Camilien Houde, himself and George Drew. In this image, Duplessis's nose is pierced by his celebrated padlock, while Drew is naked and loin-clothed (or so we are led to believe: it may be that Duplessis's hair functions as a loincloth or as a visual substitute for Drew's genitalia). The totem is emblematic of the aboriginal, seen here as a vanishing presence, just as it is hoped that the Conservative party will vanish, along with its "fascist" membership. These cultural assumptions may only be supported by LaPalme for the sake of this image; they imply widespread, pre-existing notions among LaPalme's readership. The repertoire of debasing vocabulary is loosely employed; Duplessis's stomach and groin are signalled by the placing of the keyhole to his padlock, and Arcand's legs part to reveal a swastika, the tip of which reaches behind his trousers to his buttocks. The second-layer connotations of anus and genitals are prompted by the assembling of elements on the totem pole.

LaPalme thus makes easy work of conflations between ethnicity, sexuality and politics. But when language and skin colour are used to stage identity conflicts, LaPalme enters much more difficult territory. We have seen the longer tradition of this difficulty in Québec caricature. In 1899, Henri Julien ascribed blackness to the francophone prime minister, Wilfrid Laurier, in the *Songs of the By-Town Coons* (Figure 5-24). He did not resort to the language of visual stereotype and distortion (he did not impose the "fracture") on Laurier's body in the way that A. G. Racey did later in the same year (Figure 5-25). In the 1951 caricature *Dans "notre" armée*, (Figure 5-13), LaPalme contributed a visual image to a series of written comparisons begun by Gérard Filion in

1949. In that year, South Africa had initiated its official policy of *apartheid* or segregation between whites, coloureds and blacks, systematically stripping the black majority of its political and human rights. The brutal fate of black miners under this policy was a subject of extensive comment in Québec, as elsewhere. In the same year, the appalling working conditions that led to the Asbestos strike prompted Filion to compare francophone workers in Québec to the black South African miners. In 1950, LaPalme drew francophone Canadian prime minister Louis Saint-Laurent, known widely as “Uncle Louis”, as a “nègre de qualité” – effectively transmuting Uncle Louis into the black *Uncle Tom* (Figure 5-23). In 1951, the policy of the Canadian Army to not operate bilingually led LaPalme to portray minister of defence Brooke Claxton as saying “The trouble with our coloured people is that they’re white”. By 1959, when the term “no white nigger in the town” appeared in a drawing by Cler in the *Quartier Latin*, the term enjoyed wide currency and did not require visual representation except as an inscription. The visual incarnation of blackness grafted onto the white body was alluded to through a slogan. In 1968 Pierre Vallières titled his revolutionary tract on the oppressed condition that he saw for himself and his fellow *québécois*, “Nègres blancs d’amérique”. Along the way, André Laurendeau’s 1958 “Théorie du roi nègre” had transformed Duplessis into the exemplary French-Canadian denigrated black man that had been implied since 1949. We saw that this editorial effectively occupied a territory of colour and identity transmutation that “francophone” caricature, at any rate, was unprepared to consider.

The sexualized body, taken in consideration with LaPalme’s description of Duplessis’s aging, decaying and dying body, offered LaPalme his easiest mode of attack. In this

mode he is more consistently concerned with the individual's, rather than the group's, identity. The sexualized body is seen as explicitly chaste, unveiled, violated, penetrated, attacked; as asexual, homosexual, or heterosexual; as pedophile or prostitute. LaPalme actively subjected the bodies of Duplessis and the other politicians that he attacked to a process of unclothing. Duplessis was seen in the bath (Figure 4-51), or dressed in a moth-eaten toga, his buttocks and spine showing (Figure 6-2), or mincing in a gown (Figure 5-38). André Laurendeau was seen from behind in the shower, buttocks and spine carefully delineated. As a cross-dressing Spanish dancer, he tempted young nationalists with glimpses of bare calf and thigh (Figure 4-35). Brooke Claxton was drawn on the beach, his swimsuit clearly shaped around a semi-erect phallic shape (Figure 5-42). The female body was most often idealized according to a set of pinup rules, with breasts, hair, buttocks and pubis over-emphasized: in the 1951 social satire, *Les moments difficiles*, this treatment was accorded to the body of the voluptuous daughter about to go on her first date, as well as to that of her mother (Figure 5-41).

When it becomes emblematic of the group, however, this *volupté* also gives rise to the violent contrasts present in the 1955 image *Re: Hotel Maisonneuve* (Figure 5-45). Mademoiselle Québec, bound hand and foot, her legs bent back behind her knees and her ankles tucked into the small of her back, is still alive despite being butchered like a chicken by Duplessis. His open mouth reveals sharpened teeth, suggesting imminent cannibalism, as he calls out to an American customer; he wipes his bloodied hands in a *fleur de lys* Québec flag (Duplessis's government had this flag adopted in 1948; it was based on a model circulated in wartime pro-Pétain Union nationale publications). The

pretext for the drawing was the naming of the new CN Hotel in Montreal after Elizabeth, the British (and Canadian) Queen, instead of after a figure such as Maisonneuve who would be more emblematic of French history and heritage. LaPalme unleashed unreservedly gory and harshly cruel violence when he gendered national conflicts in this way.

Beyond ethnic and sexual belonging, LaPalme described the fusion of the Duplessis body to the body politic through the representation of its aging and decay. In the 1957 *Le Devoir* cartoon *Rapt*, LaPalme presented Maurice Duplessis in a greatcoat, running towards a car labelled “Auto/nomie à Maurice,” its door open, as he hoists a frightened young woman (“Autonomie de Montréal), his hand over her mouth (Figure 5-82). On the surface this image concerns Duplessis’s attempts to limit the autonomy of Montréal’s municipal administration. A secondary reading is provided by a small news story that appeared in the same issue of *Le Devoir*. This news story relates the court appearance of three young men, accused of forcible detention (*rapt*) and violent theft against a young woman, have appeared in court. Duplessis parodically re-enacts their crime in LaPalme’s drawing. Unkempt, his hair brushed out, stubble on his the tip of his nose, his jaws receding, Duplessis skips furtively to the waiting automobile. Where two decades earlier he enjoyed a reputation as a lady-killer, he now acts like an elderly bachelor out to have his way with a girl who is far too young. The insalubrious overtones are deliberate. The image was intended to strike bitterly in ways that the registers of speech in *Le Devoir* could not do. The notion of an implied violation – a rape – was vital to LaPalme’s

argument; but Duplessis is also shown as so decrepit that we are left to wonder at the extent of his sexual capacity, and to consider him, after all, as ineffectual.

LaPalme made Duplessis explicitly excessive and grotesque in "*Ça parl' au yabl'*" (Figure 5-61). Here, Duplessis is an elderly wizard, eyes and dripping nose both drooping, his talon-tipped fingers awkwardly holding a white pencil while he writes out calculations for yet another election date. The naked Laurendeau (*Lorendo*), Filion and Laporte are being cooked in a pot over a natural gas flame emitted from piping that echoes the Duplessis nose. Laurendeau and Filion look bemused, while Laporte looks more frightened. Here, decay and aging are signalled through the extremely arthritic stance of the Duplessis figure and its hazy-eyed, gap-toothed, open-jawed face, but also, and crucially, through his language. "*Ça parl' au 'yabl'*", says the title. LaPalme had associated this expression to Duplessis since 1952: its dropped vowels and consonants might just as well have been uttered by Henri Julien's *Vieux de '37* (Figure 6-3).

LaPalme's title evokes the ancient ways of the *habitants* who had fought the rebellion, and the struggles with the devil that were perennial subjects of the old folktales collected by Honoré Beaugrand, Louis Fréchette and Marius Barbeau. Duplessis's dripping nose is the abject sign of doddering age. The entire revolved order of Québec's folkloric, superstitious identity, is being left midway between pagan and Catholic beliefs. Like Duplessis, LaPalme is making a soup out of a whole collection of identity anxieties, all present in this one image. The cooking of humans conjures up the "savage" societies of Africa where Québec was still busy with missionary and charitable activities; Duplessis writes complex calculations representing the magic symbolism of numbers as the root of

his renewed hold on political power. Duplessis is “written on” in turn; his gown is adorned with zodiacal inscription. These sign systems point to a multifaceted non-rational realm. This realm has its own coherence, as a repository for Western anxieties about ethnic difference and for Québec’s anxieties about its own conflicted past. Meanwhile, though clearly in hot water, the *Le Devoir* journalists Laurendeau, Filion and Laporte are of course unclothed, wear no inscriptions – are almost a *tabula rasa* in comparison. Indeed, they were anxious to sweep away Duplessis’s deeply symbolic hold on Québec’s self-representation.

In *Ça parl’ au yabl*, the Duplessis figure was nearing the final limits of representation made possible through the “*fractures*” of both body and language that LaPalme had so relentlessly deployed over the course of sixteen years, thereby attaining the status of *hyperprésence* described by Bertrand Tillier. The recourse to individual and group identity markers had been rooted in conflict, and had produced many conflicting treatments that remained unresolved except through this coherence in LaPalme’s graphic satire. In the final section of this chapter, we close our examination of caricature in the age of Duplessis by reaching outside the parameters of art history. Having documented its place in the dialectic components of graphic satire, we call on another model that accounts for the mythic processes in Québec’s representation of its identity in, and through, its history. This model also arises from, and seeks to explain, the presence of “*fractures*” lodged at the heart of Québec’s mythic order.

### **3. Caricature, *Grande Noirceur* and Quiet Revolution: the prefigurative function of myth**



To restate and rephrase some of the governing tenets of this study, we have developed an understanding of caricature as a language whose power significantly depends on its capacity to represent individual and group (we might say, historical) identity in varying degrees of conflict and contradiction, for which caricature provides a resolution through a satiric approach to representation itself. We have established how LaPalme's Duplessis achieved a mythic status that was in battle with the myths operated by Duplessis himself. We have even posited Duplessis's governance of Québec as itself satirical.

Our purpose in this final section is to investigate another theoretical model for Québec political caricature in the age of Duplessis. We turn to a recent formulation of a theory for myth in the Québec of the era we have examined here to see if it might explain the processes at work when LaPalme's caricature collapses after the death of Maurice Duplessis.

We take our model from recent work by Gérard Bouchard: specifically, two studies published in 2003 – *Les deux chanoines: Contradiction et ambivalence dans la pensée de Lionel Groulx* and *Raison et contradiction: Le mythe au secours de la pensée*. Bouchard proposed an applied methodology for assessing how myth joins with reason to constitute systems of thought – named *pensée radicale*, *pensée organique* and *pensée équivoque* – whose purpose is to overcome the contradictions inherent in societies in order to produce coherence.<sup>2</sup> The advantage to us in using this model is its relationship to the entire 1900-

60 period. We will ask if caricature participates in the forging of social consensus in an era seen by Bouchard as marked by the characteristics of *pensée equivoque* (incoherence among ideas, inefficacy of myth). Because we know that the era yielded to another, closer to his understanding of *pensée organique* – the Quiet Revolution – we must ask if caricature exactly mirrored its era or whether, as we suspect, it was a force that prepared major changes in *pensée*.

There is a moment, liminal in two senses, which allows us to postulate the visibility of our subject. In January 1960, Québec was at the mid-point between the death of Maurice Duplessis the previous September and the election of Jean Lesage's Liberals the following June. Pierre Laporte, the *Le Devoir* journalist whom we last saw staring fretfully at the wizard Duplessis (Figure 5-61), completed a manuscript called *Le vrai visage de Duplessis*.<sup>3</sup> The first chapter, "Maurice Duplessis – l'homme", opens by addressing his very "visage" and its place in visual and political culture – in the imagery of Québec society:

Peu d'hommes politiques ont été aussi caricaturés que monsieur Duplessis. Ce fait s'explique d'abord parce que ses attitudes politiques prêtaient généralement à la controverse [...]. Les gens le considéraient comme l'antéchrist ou comme une sorte de messie [...]. Les caricaturistes avaient un matériel de choix quand monsieur Duplessis parlait ou agissait. De plus il avait une *tête à caricature*. Un nez exagérément allongé, quelques traits plus prononcés suffisaient à le représenter.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Gérard Bouchard, *Les deux chanoines. Contradiction et ambivalence dans la pensée de Lionel Groulx* (Montréal: Boréal, 2003) (cited below as Bouchard, *Chanoines*) and *Raison et contradiction. Le mythe au secours de la pensée* (Montréal: Nota Bene/CEFAN, 2003) (cited below as Bouchard, *Raisons*).

<sup>3</sup> Taken from the facsimile edition published in the wake of Laporte's assassination in 1970. Pierre Laporte, *Le vrai visage de Duplessis* (Montreal: Les éditions de l'homme, n.d. [c. 1970]). The introduction to the volume is dated by Laporte February 15, 1960.

On the threshold of a volume resuming fourteen years' experience of the traits, political and personal, that animated Duplessis's uncanny ability to manipulate rhetoric and representation in the pursuit and consolidation of power for himself and his administration, this description of the man through caricature is emblematic of caricature's normative status in the work of understanding politics and politicians.

Duplessis's actions no longer merely commented on the values of society, they connoted those of its titular leader. And the dynamics of connotation are crucial, because the actions of LaPalme's Duplessis took place in a realm whose internal coherence was, as we have seen, entirely governed by LaPalme: a realm where verifiable space, time, and laws of behaviour were suspended in favour of an order that could not make sense in the world outside the newspaper, but that was internally consistent, with recurring themes and characterizations that constantly redeployed Duplessis in a purely symbolic universe. While his actions in this universe might appeal to readers' knowledge about his actions as reported in the press – thus through the filter of an intermediary realm of representation – they could not be verifiable. Indeed their power was founded on the strength of the artist's symbolic expression. LaPalme's Duplessis answers the definition for myth used by Gérard Bouchard in *Raison et contradiction. Le mythe au secours de la pensée*: it makes meaningful propositions that do not require verification, it is fuelled by the

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<sup>4</sup> Laporte, *op. cit.*: 11. Laporte expands on this theme through the following two pages, relating anecdotes through which it becomes clear that Duplessis at times relished, and at others resented, the reputation earned by his nose.

imaginary, it needs be neither true nor false as long as it is efficient, and it operates across the wellsprings – arts, philosophy, theology, sciences – that produce the imaginary.<sup>5</sup>

This mythic realm was consonant with the newspaper's unceasing investigations and analysis of corruption, and with what it considered to be the incoherent socio-economic agendas of Duplessis's government. By extension, it indicted not only a political party but more importantly a system of values and political behaviour. The indictment, the inference of moral judgement, adds satire to the panoply of ironic modes present in political caricature. But how did caricature come to symbolically prefigure the impetus for change in power?

Our contention is that it did so by operating simultaneously on each of the systems of *pensée* presented by Bouchard. LaPalme's body of work forms a long-term presentation to his readers of a social and political system that is characteristic of *pensée équivoque*, reflective of the system's incoherence and of its tendency to depressive myths, to fragmentary thought and to inhibited development. Within this system, LaPalme's Duplessis is the mythic representative of an opportunist *pensée radicale* in ironic inversion, which LaPalme attempts to undermine by presenting it as mockingly self-asserting. As a representation of this duality, LaPalme's work is itself coherent, and a

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<sup>5</sup> "Le mythe est un énoncé de sens dont la caractéristique principale est de n'être pas vérifiable. Il est motivé par des émotions, des rêveries, des croyances, des intérêts, et il relève d'un ordre normatif qui n'est pas d'abord celui de la vérité ou de la fausseté mais de l'efficacité [...] tout comme l'imaginaire dont il est un élément constitutif, il participe à la fois de la réalité empirique et de la faction[...] Du fait qu'il ne relève que partiellement de l'empirique, il se dérobe toujours à une validation intégrale : il est pris en charge par des processus d'accréditation sociale qui l'affranchissent en partie des règles de la connaissance positive; c'est ce qui lui confère une certaine autonomie et fonde sa longévité » . Bouchard, *Raison* : 28-29.

component of a concomitantly coherent system of *pensée organique*: a system-in-waiting insofar as Québec politics and society are concerned.

Evidently profoundly concerned by Québec's long-lasting inability to emancipate itself from the regime of *pensée équivoque*, Bouchard establishes a two-way metaphor between Québec society up to the 1950s and the career of Lionel Groulx, whom Bouchard studies as an incarnation of the contradictions and *antinomies* that form the duality of a torn, fragmented society:

L'ensemble de cet itinéraire tourmenté, brisé, met en relief la grande difficulté, pour un nationaliste, de penser le Québec et le Canada français de cette époque: dès lors qu'on écarte les solutions radicales, comment représenter d'une façon cohérente une société aussi déchirée, aussi *désemparée* ? En ce sens, on dira donc: Groulx, un homme morcelé, dressé contre lui-même, tout comme la société qu'il a voulu prendre en charge.<sup>6</sup>

In *Raison et contradiction*, Bouchard identifies the Québec of 1950 with *pensée équivoque* in a characterization which oddly reflects, at fifty years' distance, the image of defeat. The society was in the throes of its own sense of fragility, importing all its scientific culture. It had no great literary or artistic currents, it was as yet unable to accommodate the international labour movement, and above all it had no great *mythes populaires projecteurs*.<sup>7</sup> These premises are debatable, although they can be admitted for the purposes of argument because of the many statements that survive from the era that

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<sup>6</sup> "La dualité sous forme de dichotomie ou d'antinomie est de loin la principale figure qui ressort de mes analyses. Ce n'est qu'en toute fin de parcours qu'on la voit se replier, en l'occurrence du côté du conservatisme, sinon de la réaction. L'ensemble de cet itinéraire tourmenté, brisé, met en relief la grande difficulté, pour un nationaliste, de penser le Québec et le Canada français de cette époque: dès lors qu'on écarte les solutions radicales, comment représenter d'une façon cohérente une société aussi déchirée, aussi *désemparée* ? En ce sens, on dira donc: Groulx, un homme morcelé, dressé contre lui-même, tout comme la société qu'il a voulu prendre en charge." Bouchard, *Chanoines*: 248.

<sup>7</sup> Bouchard, *Raison* : 87 ff.

indicate how much they bear witness to a particular political representation of society in the 1950s. Georges-Émile Lapalme, André Laurendeau, Jean Drapeau, each characterized the impasse that Québec society must overcome. Only through government reform, secularization and professionalization of public services – only through a rupture of the intensely personal association of the state to one party, and above all, to one man – could society truly go forward, and could French Canadian identity be renewed and positioned as a full participant, a full subjective identity, in the contemporary world. In the realm of representations, then, Bouchard's characterizations are recognizable. Since our study has concerned the ways in which caricatures function within a wider system of representations, caricature becomes part of the process that seeks to overcome the *équivoque*.

Bouchard goes further. As he describes these limitations of cultural and scientific achievement, among Québec's élites, he also calls to account the widespread recourse among all classes to the "American way of life" (opening the notion of *Américanité* that Bouchard has dealt with elsewhere), the paradoxical reconfiguration of inimicality to the English, and the evolving role of religion. No intellectual or ideologue would take up the challenge offered by these new bases of popular support.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The importance of using a concept of *Américanité* that includes an identity position for collectivities in the New World (not limited by any means to the US) has been explored by both Bouchard and Yvan Lamonde in recent years. See Gérard Bouchard and Yvan Lamonde, eds. *Québécois et américains. La culture québécoise aux XIXe et XXe siècles* (Montréal, Fides, 1995) and Gérard Bouchard, *Genèse des nations et cultures du Nouveau Monde. Essai d'histoire comparée* (Montreal, Boréal, 2000)

We can never lose sight of the threatening, almost American place of mass journalism in Québec of the first half of the twentieth century. We saw early on how Groulx and Roy considered caricature in mass-market newspapers to be a American threat to their francophile projects. Taking up a debate around the appropriateness of irony in literature then current in France, their vision of a national cultural production had no place for the processes of irony and humour. By the same token, ironic methods of social and political invective were wholeheartedly embraced by other defenders of the importance of French culture: figures such as Jules Fournier and Olivar Asselin, who duly invested their publication *Le nationaliste* with the weaponry of political wit. Asselin, the devout Catholic with an unshakeable belief in the necessity of secular education, was the first of a series of journalists – Jean-Louis Gagnon, Jean-Charles Harvey, Edmond Turcotte, Gérard Filion, André Laurendeau, and Jacques Hébert – who would co-opt LaPalme's talents. All of these figures have been seen as early – and not so quiet – revolutionaries. All to different degrees articulated new, sometimes very difficult positions for the Catholic traditions in which they had been raised and which they sought to keep in the foreground of their ambitions for Québec society. At all times, LaPalme's caricature belonged to a political process in which matters of language, origin and faith were always involved. These journalists, writers, editors and publishers had sought to break the impasses that they felt were placed in the way of Québec's accession to modernity. And as we have seen, there were notions articulated by faith that were far richer and more culturally productive than the mere concern, important though it was, over the role of the Church in the administration of Québec public services. LaPalme's images were made

directly in contexts informed by Catholic engagements with apocalypse, agnosticism and the limits of personal liberty.

In *Les deux chanoines*, Bouchard enumerates the areas of Lionel Groulx's preoccupations, articulated in *antinomies*, that each end in a similar impasse, the same impasse that operates for the Québec *collectivité* as a whole. Groulx's advocacy of nationalism was founded in the ideal of a French North American nation imagined beyond the borders of Québec. This laid the ground for a first incoherence, since there was no recognizable entity that successfully harnessed and symbolized this nationality, namely an identifiable territory that it (and Groulx) might deploy. Groulx's supranational corporatist nation, which must be truly Catholic, based in an agrarian model, and exemplary of a limited vision of Frenchness that was largely discredited in France itself, meant that his contradictory thought was prone to inoperable myths. He preached an unrealizable national ideal against the overwhelming currents of his time. Anglo-Saxon capital was well implanted in Québec. Liberalism and new socio-economic elites continued their rise throughout the Western world. At the same time the hardening of social relations and the radicalization of international labour movements had their impact on Québec society. They engendered, in Groulx and the élite from which he arose, fearful resistances, appeals to hermetic visions of race and ethnicity and romantic allegiances to ideals which came to take on a more and more ethereal, abstract character. In a further contradiction, Groulx's espousal and defence of these ideals could take on a virulent, excessive character that ranged his expression close to the forms of verbal grotesquery and caricature. Doing so, ironically, undermined and lampooned any recourse to the



ideal. Bouchard comes to conclude that for Groulx, as for his society, these were “impasses structurelles – doubles verrous [...] fractures logées au coeur de la société et son devenir.”<sup>9</sup>

Certainly, LaPalme's Duplessis incarnated the sense of defeat in comic terms. But LaPalme represented this fractured society by the relationship between two mythic poles, Duplessis and the all-purpose Baptiste, the Québec be-toqued Everyman symbol that had been in existence since the eighteenth century. In LaPalme's work Baptiste is important as a non-figure, a cipher for Duplessis, as an empty and ironically used stereotype far too emblematic to be invested with real character or complexity. The richness of character was always on Duplessis's side: he would sell out Baptiste's national resources to avaricious Uncle Sams. He would pick Baptiste's pocket, pickle him in a jar of alcohol, tell him that education was not for him, that the road to unions was closed because it was festooned with communists. He would waylay him at a 24-hour roadside tavern (on a bridge to prosperity that Baptiste could never cross; he would push him into the US-owned factory to work for low wages (Figure 5-80). In a departure from a typology of older, pipe-smoking and wise Baptistes that peopled the works of the later Henri Julien and then Albéric Bourgeois, LaPalme's Baptiste was always a young, formless man, vigorous enough but without any imprint of personality. He was not a productive symbol for Québec, but rather an endlessly revisited *tabula rasa* on which Duplessis would write his next escapade. LaPalme confined almost all allusion to Québec national or social types to the figure of Duplessis himself. In this he was the demonic successor to the

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<sup>9</sup> Bouchard, *Chanoines* : 231-236.

*habitant*, to Baptiste – and sometimes, to Catherine. He was a reactionary Québec refusing to allow a newer one to thrive.

Duplessis was not only an agent, very often a *provocateur*, but was also given to a wide range of states of being. He was the politician in office – often literally *in* his office – dispensing favours and trading insults. He was the politician on the hustings. He strode through his lands, personifying his hold on natural resources and infrastructure at every turn. He was gambler, teacher, policeman, pimp, householder sweeping the mess under the carpet, the society lady at a fitting for a new gown, a disembodied head–key about to penetrate a padlock. He was a mere head out-measured by a nose that could disappear beyond the caricature’s frame only to reappear behind him. He was a magician, obsessively dabbling in superstitious numerology to calculate the optimum timing for the next elections.

As such, Duplessis was at once a manifold figure of derision. He was also an inverted Everyman, since each of these personifications recast him among configurations of authority, of gender relations, of popular belief, and found him by turns triumphant, worried, angry, expostulating, crowing, winking and wise. His amorphous presence effectively acted as a lightning rod for a litany of public and private anxieties.

In some ways this is best reflected in his role as head gangster, often seen with a cosh in hand, or at a cellar table giving instructions to his hoodlums. They are usually members of the press, each shown as a comic hulk, with brutalized face not far from the recourse to

simian characteristics common to caricatures of the Irish and of Africans (Figure 5-81). This allusion to state-sanctioned lawlessness is ironic on several levels, since it alludes to the corruption attributed to a government apparently bent on fiercely maintaining law and order while regularly being shown as unable to do so. The press is complicit, within the pages of the very journal claiming neutral distance from the government. The law is impotent, usurped, for a system of law operates powerfully at the level where a parallel illegality can transgress and replace the laws, doing so with its own codes and coherence. Such was Georges-Emile Lapalme's assessment of Duplessis, the all-knowing code-maker and keeper of the most intimate secrets of the National Assembly. Alongside Robert LaPalme, Maurice Duplessis was an outstanding satirist of the state.

Earlier in the present chapter, we revisited Lapalme's work for cross-readings in identity themes of ethnicity, language, sexuality, aging, decay, death – the markers of the lived and experienced body. The importance of ethnicity and identity are correspondingly central to Bouchard's categorizations of society. He is silent on the question of sexuality despite its importance, in the wider social changes of the 1960s, to Québec's Quiet Revolution. When this zone of myth is highly visible in LaPalme's graphic satire, it bridges the concerns of ideological and intellectual leadership and those of the popular cultural concerns on which, as Bouchard says, that leadership is unable to capitalize.

Unable or, as Bouchard points out, unwilling: for that which Groulx most advocated inevitably led to what he most feared, resulting in his taking refuge in the ideal, in the amorphous realms of the French Catholic soul, of national mystical consciousness, of

spirituality and individual morality, in dreams of the hero and the martyr. He was unable to theorize successfully either the status quo (traditions, continuity of ancien régime France, the governance of religious life by Rome, the resistance to the laicisation of education) or change (modernity, the increasing evidence of Québec's part in what Bouchard has investigated elsewhere as *Américanité*, the need for Québec to take its place in a secularised, technocratic world order). Groulx had dreams for a people who, as Bouchard says, "se donnait d'autres rendez-vous – beaucoup moins romantiques – avec l'histoire."<sup>10</sup>

In this light, LaPalme's Baptiste, unformed and open to the manipulations of his Duplessis, was at just such a rendez-vous. LaPalme's universe was peopled with contradictions similar to those faced by Groulx, but LaPalme faced them more joyfully. If Duplessis was a pimp to American interests, it was simply that he transgressed a belief that a productive nation should be able to direct the exploitation of its resources to the greater benefit of its citizens – as would famously be the case under the first Lesage administration with the nationalization of Hydro-Québec.<sup>11</sup>

It can be argued that Groulx's world-view, the one that Bouchard ascribes to the Québec of 1950, could not succeed because of its very inability to brook the usefulness of irony. LaPalme's mythic Duplessis was both inherently and expressively ironic. Irony enjoyed a troubled status at the time of Groulx's ascendancy in Québec affairs, after 1900. The

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<sup>10</sup> Bouchard, *Chanoines* : 242

<sup>11</sup> See Thomson, *op. cit.*, 233 ff.

irony favoured by the widely admired Anatole France was attacked on moral grounds. This was partly because such forms of mockery were uncharitable, self-aggrandizing and immodest, but also because they blurred the lines “between beauty and ugliness, good and evil, happiness and misery, forming an undifferentiated mass in which art cannot fulfill its first mission, to teach mankind on the road to progress”.<sup>12</sup>

For Groulx, ideals of beauty, goodness and happiness went hand in hand with a vigorous, youthful nation, and in the 1930s he favoured the type of totalitarian regime, which Bouchard characterizes through *pensée radicale*, then emerging in Europe. Bouchard collates the examples of Groulx’s admiration for the efforts of European fascist leaders, and even the Soviets, to mould a young generation to ideals of patriotic respect.<sup>13</sup> In his 1934 letter to the young editorial team at *Vivre*, Groulx expressed admiration for their courage : “Après tout, il n’y a pas de raison pour que l’atmosphère d’un pays jeune, d’un pays catholique et français soit irrespirable ou ne soit qu’une atmosphère de neurasthéniques.”<sup>14</sup>

The irony of fate, arising from the unexpected reversal of fortune following the juxtaposition of contradictory elements, would come to play a profound role in Groulx’s

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<sup>12</sup> Pierre Schoentjes, in *Poétique de l’ironie* (Paris, Éditions du Seuil), examines this significant clerical resistance to irony in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Paris, in “Les conservateurs opposés à l’ironie”, 269-271.

<sup>13</sup> Bouchard, *Raisons* : 88-89

<sup>14</sup> Lionel Groulx, *Mes mémoires. Tome III* (Montréal : Fides, 1972): 270, 290-91. Among the team, who publish a caricature of Groulx by LaPalme, is Jean-Louis Gagnon, who will eventually persuade LaPalme to leave *Le Devoir* for *La Presse* in 1959, and to go with him to his own *Nouveau-Journal* in 1961. See also Nadeau, *op. cit* : 145

life and change the course of Québec's development. While he had longed for a strong figure of the order of Dolfuss or Mussolini to come to power in Québec, he watched horrified as the longed-for reversal by Paul Gouin of the corrupt and inert Liberal Taschereau régime was travestied by the usurping Maurice Duplessis.<sup>15</sup> In his memoirs, Groulx wondered:

Mes ambitions, mes rêves s'élevaient-ils trop haut? Je m'étais flatté de l'espoir qu'un jour viendrait où un petit peuple, le nôtre, prendrait en mains, tout de bon, son destin [...] eh oui, nous nous sentions, aux environs de 1935, si près de la chance suprême, de l'unique chance peut-être de remonter la dure côte des malheurs accumulés depuis 1760. Et ce sont toutes ces espérances qu'il nous fallut rentrer, les ailes broyées.<sup>16</sup>

At the level of symbolic representations, it can be argued that despite the setback and repulsion experienced by many at the election of Duplessis, his perceived cynicism ("tout le monde sait que les promesses d'élection, c'est fait pour être violées") would become the necessary foil for the young generation of the 1930s to keep its own rendez-vous with history.<sup>17</sup> Their vision would ally itself, as Jocelyn Letourneau and Gilles Bourque have argued, not with the strong figure or with the ethereal concept of national mission that Groulx entertained, but with Québec as a providential state significantly shifting the source of salvation from an emblematic leader to a collective, legal entity with defined representational parameters.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Groulx, *op. cit.*: 316-317.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*:327

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> The concepts of Grande Noirceur and Révolution tranquille are defended in their status as central categories of the collective self in relation to the other, as fundamental origin myths and organising narratives of contemporary Quebec identity by Jocelyn Letourneau, « La révolution tranquille, catégorie

Thus the vocabularies and language of irony deployed across LaPalme's Duplessis caricatures have the effect of satirizing a régime that could be so dependent on and held hostage by a figure such as Duplessis. LaPalme's work prefigured the death of the man and the system he symbolized, and placed them in the order of myth.

LaPalme's endeavour was ironic at every level. Beyond the observation that each drawing invites us to give credence to a situation that cannot possibly have occurred – a fundamental ironic tenet – LaPalme's line, spatial organisation and iconographic organisation each bore a level of ironic power.<sup>19</sup> Recognizable or allegorical figures deployed in symbolic space were rendered in LaPalme's joyful and supple line. The same line could swiftly alternate between beauty, decay and the grotesque. His line seldom described even the outline of a figure, but rather constituted a set of juxtaposed calligraphic marks that might collude in suggesting volume – but that might just as easily cross over from description of volume to the outlining of internal form (from chin to cheek, from calf-line to shadow beneath the knee). The visual operations were entirely suggestive of human appearance and resemblance but were resolutely irreducible to verifiable description. They were altogether dependent on the reader's ability to make sense of liminal approaches to form and character.

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identitaire », in Alain-G. Ganon and Michel Sarra-Bourret, eds. *Duplessis entre la Grande Noirceur et la société libérale* (Montréal : Editions Québec Amérique, 1997) : 99-100, 116-117.

<sup>19</sup> Our discussion of the levels of irony in LaPalme summarizes concepts explored chiefly for literature in Schoentjes, *op. cit.* See the following sections : « Présentation », esp pp. 18-25; « L'ironie de situation », esp 48-61, and 68 for a discussion of the role of aporia; Northrop Frye on irony, pp 216, 219; chapter 5, *L'ironie romantique*, 100-134, esp 104-108, « Le rôle de l'art dans le champ philosophique »; and chapter 10, « L'ironie moderne », 243-285.

With the same visual vocabulary LaPalme established an equally polysemic space whose closest equivalent might be the rapid-change backdrops of vaudeville. But more often than not the elements he drew obeyed the changing logic that came by using different systems of narrative. Discrete elements – episodes within the same drawing – might not operate sequentially or even in awareness of one another, but would produce meanings through the act of reading. Frequently such strategies would be inverted through LaPalme's fondness for the rebus, in which favoured elements recurred time and again. The relentless return to the character of Duplessis and to the stock of attributes deployed in connection with him meant that the figure gained accretions of meaning through sheer longevity. With the constitution of a lexicon of referents whose usefulness and efficiency increases with viewer familiarity, LaPalme creates a conspiratorial environment in which we meet with each drawing in order to push further and aggrandize the fictitious Duplessis we have helped support. The myth of Duplessis achieves an autonomous reality and becomes a verifiable factor in its own right.

This autonomy implies a detachment. As many writers on irony have remarked, not least in the generation of Anatole France, detachment is one of the positive effects of irony: its signals the ability to keep ourselves from transports of seriousness.<sup>20</sup> We are engaged in a dialogue in which there are two visions. LaPalme acknowledged this within the logic of his drawings. As the years passed, he increasingly addressed the audience directly from within the fictive space of the caricature, by leaving indices or statements directed at the reader, aside from (sometimes in conflict with) the captions. Paradoxically, the clerical

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<sup>20</sup> See Schoentjes, *op.cit* for a discussion of Anatole France's authority in matters of irony (*Un garant intellectuel : Anatole France*, 252-256).



critique of irony accused it of favouring self-aggrandizement, whereas it is equally held to deflate self-importance. In either case, a self-consciousness is certainly at play, and a distancing which is perhaps the element missing in Groulx's world-view according to Bouchard. Had the romantic Groulx accepted and used the processes of romantic or twentieth-century irony, he might have found the type of resolution that LaPalme was able to engender in his work of providing a mythic base for *Le Devoir's* reasoned prosecution of Duplessis' regime – and mid twentieth-century Québec – at the hands of the Laurendeau-Filion-Laporte team.

Our conclusion, then, is that caricature, in all its strategies as a productive vector and as an expression in instituted culture – as a body of work that reflects a process of the imaginary – did more than reflect the contradictions described by Bouchard in *Les deux chanoines* and *Raison et contradiction*. It provided an ironic and powerful component of an element of Québec society's mythology in the time Bouchard seeks to describe and endow with a methodology for further investigation. Myth arises and resolves or overcomes contradictions, as Bouchard reminds us. The test case of the role of Robert LaPalme in fashioning an enduring Duplessis myth shows us that caricature was co-productive of change. It led away from the inhibiting *pensée équivoque* that Bouchard claims for the period preceding the *Révolution tranquille*, because it was inherently able to fashion the very type of *mythe multivoque* or *projecteur* required for the assembly of a *pensée organique*.

Towards the close of *Les deux chanoines*, Bouchard expresses his surprise at the inoperability in Québec of certain myths he has discerned in other collectivities. How to explain the fact that processes of modernization backed by efficacious and diverse collective mythologies of national identity and history that operated in Brazil Mexico and Japan, among other states, did not take place in Québec? And, when the *Révolution tranquille* did come, how to explain the “astonishing liquidation” that took place?<sup>21</sup> The answer may surface if we consider the work we have done here in light of Bouchard’s conclusion to *Raison et contradiction*. In describing a space for further research, Bouchard invites us to proceed by comparative study. Having reminded us that a *Mythe projecteur* is a source of effervescence, mobilization and collective dynamism, he entreats us to be aware that “les mêmes procédés, ruses et subterfuges discursifs réapparaissent d’une culture à l’autre. L’analyse comparative peut faire ressortir des récurrences et même dresser le répertoire ou l’inventaire des formes utilisées.”<sup>22</sup>

We must update, says Bouchard, the ‘grammar of discourse’; and attend to a particular phenomenon:

Presque partout, la rupture culturelle avec les sociétés mères entre le 18<sup>e</sup> et le 20<sup>e</sup> siècle a pris la forme d’une mise à mort et elle s’est accompagnée d’un arsenal de procédés et de stratégies symboliques qui avaient pour effet principal non seulement de perpétrer efficacement d’acte de répudiation et de coupure, mais aussi d’aménager des compensations ou encore de déculpabiliser leurs auteurs en donnant à cet acte une légitimité, en le banalisant et parfois en le travestissant. Les mythologies qui l’ont entouré n’ont pas d’autres justifications.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Bouchard, *Chanoine*: 253.

<sup>22</sup> Bouchard, *Raisons*: 101.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p 105ff.

By enacting the deposition of the dominant political force of the era about to end, the strength of the caricatural process of myth that we have investigated here – articulated precisely around legitimacies and travesties – helped Québec to enact just such a rupture, at long last. Finally affranchised of its mother society – of itself in a long liminal phase – Québec acquired, as Jocelyn Létourneau has remarked in his defence of the terms *Révolution tranquille* and *Grande noirceur*, a myth of origins.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Létourneau, *op. cit.* In the same collection, Gilles Bourque (“Duplessis, libéralisme et société libérale”, p 267-280) For Bourque, it is important to hold onto the idea of society in order to surmount definitions based on ethnicity and nationalisms. He emphasizes that the Québec seen as prey to *pensée équivoque* by Bouchard can also be considered as an excentric, peripheral society that is pluricultural and governed by a regulation based on a liberal order, waiting for its passage to *État-providence* (279).

## Illustrations

Unless otherwise indicated, all images are by Robert LaPalme, and sources from original contexts of publication (in the case of newspapers, by digital scans printed from microfilms at the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec in Montréal).



Figure 1-1 - An overview of Robert LaPalme's caricature of Maurice Duplessis, 1937-1959

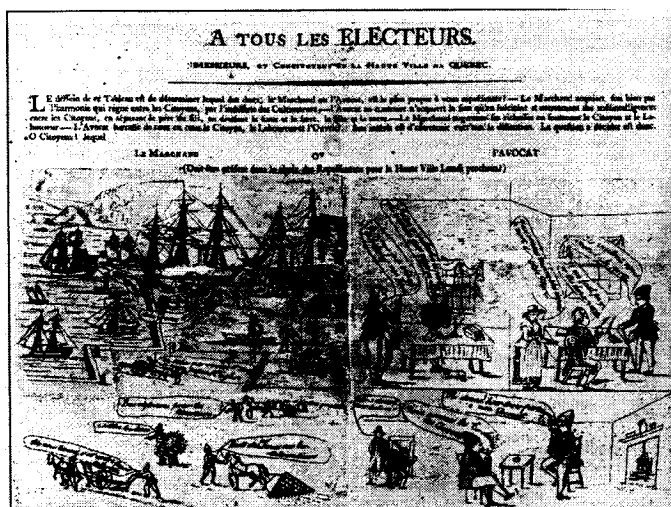
Top row – 1937, *Le Journal* (Québec); 1944, *Le Canada* (Montréal); 1944, *La revue populaire* (Montréal)

Middle row : 1952, 1958, *Le Devoir* (Montréal)



**Figure 1-2**

Le nouveau chef élu/MONSIEUR MAURICE DUPLESSIS. *La Patrie*, October 9th 1933 : 1.



**Figure 1-3**

Anonymous

À tous les Électeurs. Messieurs, et concitoyens de la Haute Ville de Québec

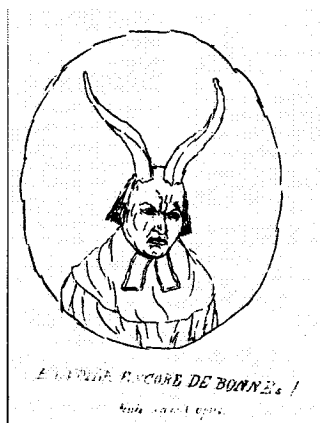
c. 1792

245 x 344 mm

Lawrence Lande Collection of Canadiana, Dept of Rare Books and Special Collections,

McGill University Libraries

reprinted in Allodi (1980), Béland (1996)



**Figure 1-4**

Louis Dulongpré (1759-1853)

EN VOILÀ ENCORE DE BONNES!

Finis coronat opus [la fin est le couronnement de l'oeuvre]

[Judge Pierre-Aimable De Bonne]

Ink drawing

17 x 13,5 cm

Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

Fonds Louis-Dulongpré (P 1000-3-3-160)

Reprinted in Béland (1996)



**Figure 1-5a**

John Henry Walker

Little Ben, Holmes. *Punch in Canada*, October 20<sup>th</sup> 1849. Reprinted in Mosher and Desbarats, *The Hecklers* (Toronto: MacLelland and Stewart, 1979): 41



**Figure 1-5 b**

Jean-Baptiste Côté

La confédération!!! *La Scie*, December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1864. Reprinted in Mosher and Desbarats (1979): 41





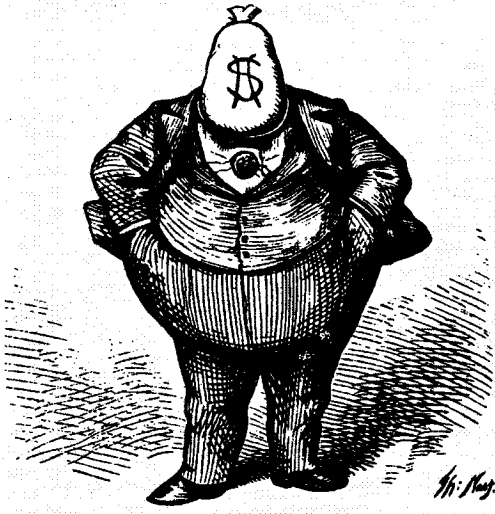
Figure 1-6a

Henri Julien

Right hand panel of "Peace Hath Her Victories No Less Than War." *Montreal Daily Star*, October 7, 1899: 13.



**Figure 1-6b**  
Henri Julien, Raising the Liberal Standard. *Canadian Illustrated News*, December 17, 1877.



**Figure 1-7a**

Thomas Nast. The "Brains". Harper's Weekly, September 21<sup>st</sup> 1871, reprinted in Mosher and Desbarats (1979): 31



**Figure 1-7 b**

John Wilson Bengough, [caricature of Alexander MacKenzie and John A MacDonald], *Grip*, 23 September 1873, reprinted in Mosher and Desbarats (1979):



**Figure 1-7c**

Honoré Daumier "Principal acteur d'un imbroglio tragic-comique" *Le Charivari*, March 29, 1835, reprinted in Charles F. Ramus, ed. Daumier. 120 Great Lithographs (New York : Dover Publications, Inc., 1978): Plate 11



**Figure 1-8 a-b**  
Honoré Daumier

“Le public, mon cher, le public est stupide...” [Robert Macaire convinces his associate to become a homeopath in order to fool the public] No 70 of the series *Caricaturana*, from *Le Charivari*, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1837, reprinted in Ramus (1978): plate 15

“Belle dame, voulez-vous accepter mon bras?” [Ratapoil, agent of Louis-Napoleon, attempts to impress the personification of France]. No. 212 of the series *Actualités*, from *Le Charivari*, September 25<sup>th</sup> 1851, reprinted in Ramus (1978): plate 76.

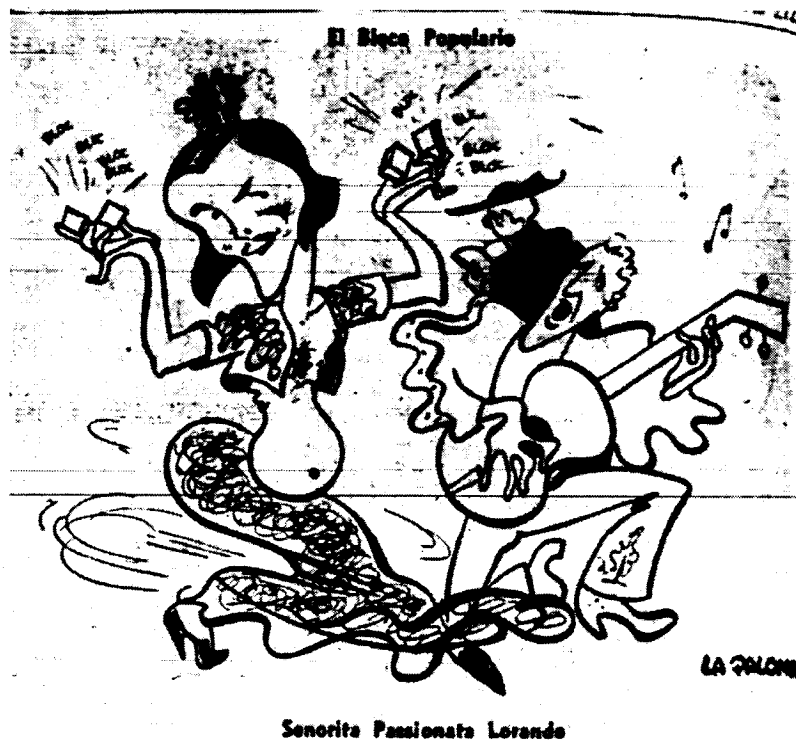


Figure 2-1  
El Bloco Populario/ Senorita Passonata Lorando  
*Le Canada*, February 24<sup>th</sup> 1944: 4

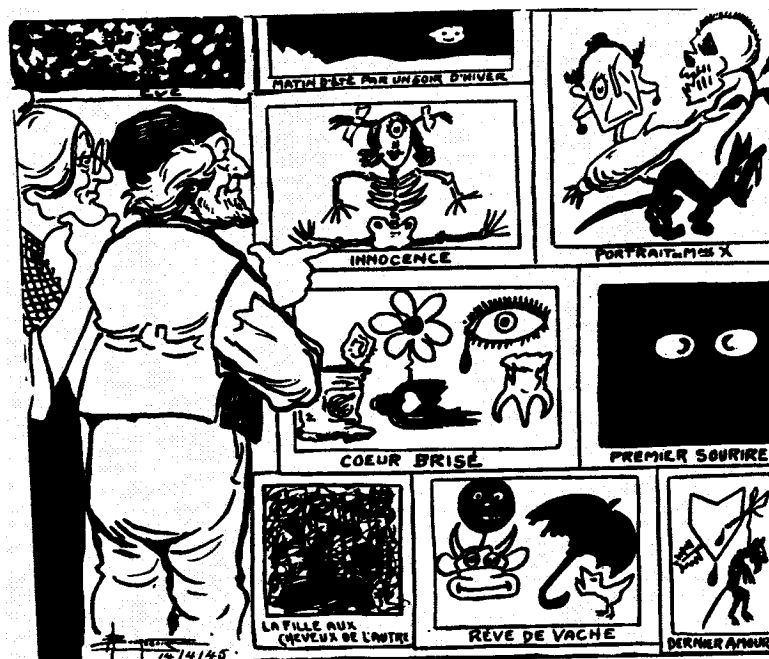


Figure 2-2  
Albéric Bourgeois, [Baptiste et Catherine à l'exposition de la galerie d'art]  
*La Presse*, April 14th 1945, reprinted in Léon Robidoux, *Albéric Bourgeois: Caricaturiste* (Montréal vlb éditeur et Médiabex, 1974) : 202

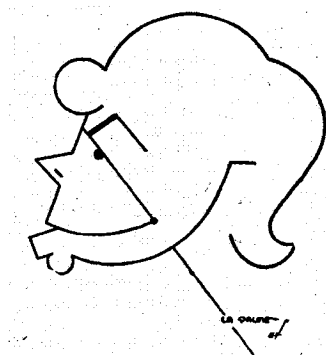


Figure 2-3

Caricature of Jovette Bernier, author of *Les masques déchirés*, from *L'Ordre*, 1934, reprinted in LaPalme (1950): 48.

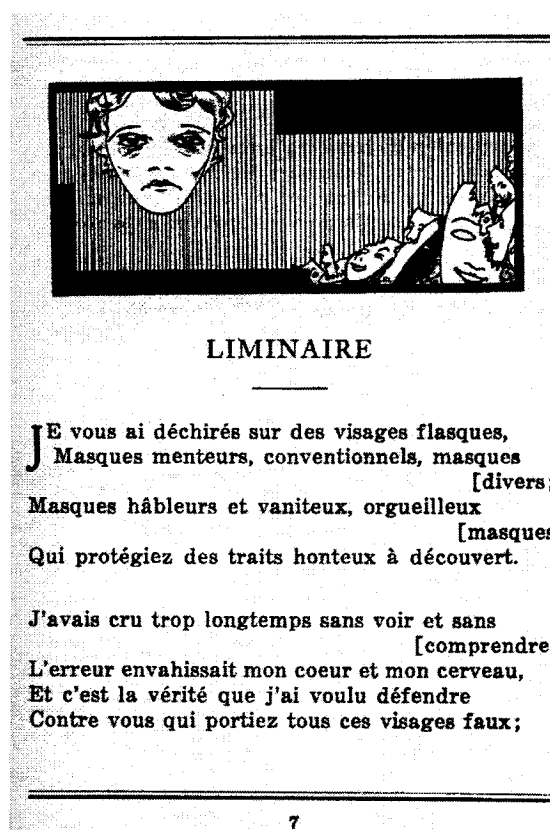


Figure 2-4

Illustration for Jovette Bernier, *Les masques déchirés* (Montréal, Éditions Albert Lévesque, 1932): 7

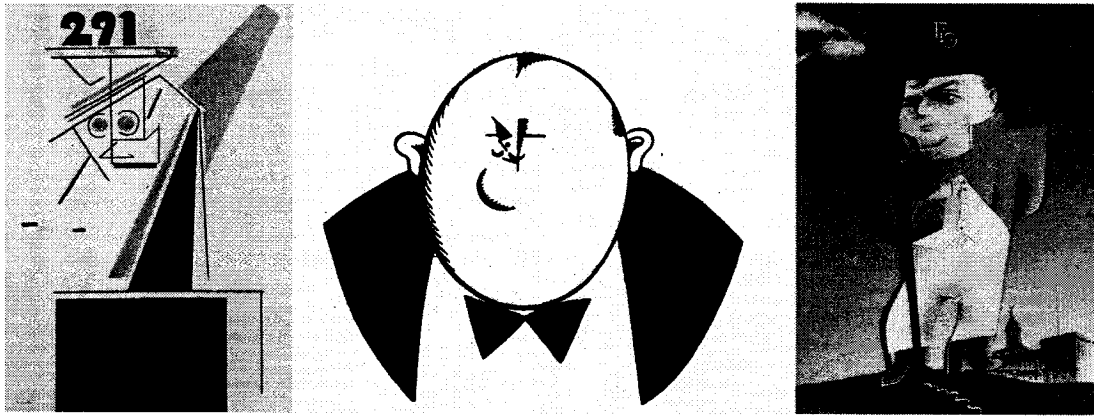


Figure 2-5 a-b-c

a)

Marius de Zayas, *Alfred Stieglitz*. Published in *291*, March 1915 cover. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Alfred Stieglitz Collection. Reprinted in Reeves, *Celebrity Caricature in America*: 101

b) Miguel Covarrubias, *Paul Whiteman* Published in Covarrubias, *The Prince of Wales and Other Famous Americans* (New York, 1925). Reprinted in Reeves, op. cit.: 171

c)

Paolo Garretto, *Fiorello La Guardia*. Original illustration for *Vanity Fair*, August 1934. Reprinted in Reeves, op. cit.: 232.



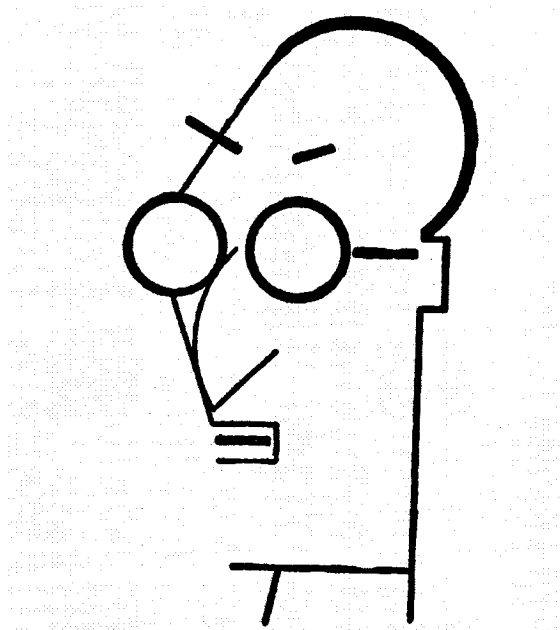


Figure 2-6  
Caricature of Robert Rumilly, *Le Petit Journal*, November 1933. Reprinted in LaPalme (1950): 45

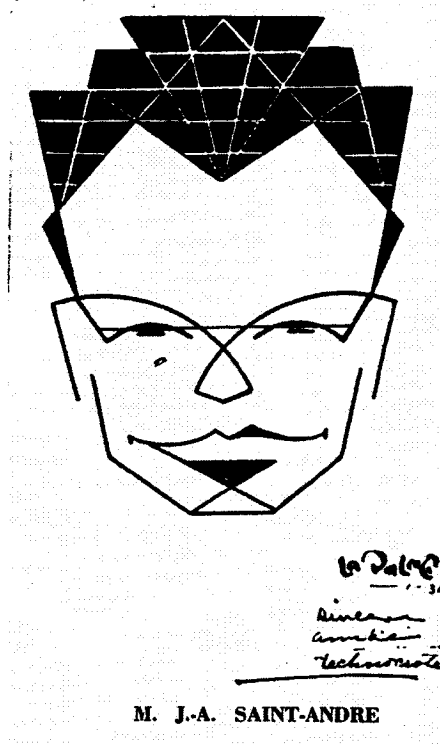


Figure 2-7  
Caricature of J.A. Saint-André. *L'Ordre*, 1934.



Figure 2-8 a, b  
Front page of *Le Nationaliste*, July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1904



Figure 2-9  
Front page of *L'Ordre*, August 15<sup>th</sup> 1934

# COMMENT S'ENRICHIR



— Y a des gens qui font bien de l'argent à la Bourse. J'sais pas diable comment est-ce qu'ils s'y prennent?  
 — C'est bien simple. Supposons que j'achète 1,000 cochons à une piastre. Eh bien, avant qu'la facture arrive, j'les revends deux piastres. J'ais du 100 pour 100.

Figure 2-10

'Essel', Comment s'enrichir

*L'Ordre*, May 5<sup>th</sup> 1934: 1

## L'APPAREIL S. D. N.



— Ça marchait si bien ! Chacun sur sa propre longueur d'onde chacun son tour à parler... Et tout d'un coup, crac ! rien ne va plus.

Figure 2-11

Essel, 'Ça marchait si bien!...'

*L'Ordre*, May 7<sup>th</sup> 1934: 1

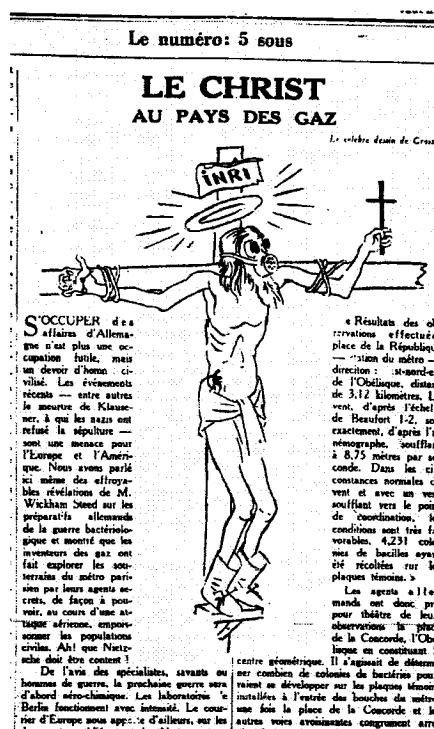


Figure 2-12  
Georg Grosz, 'Le Christ au pays des gaz'. *L'Ordre*, July 28th 1934 :1

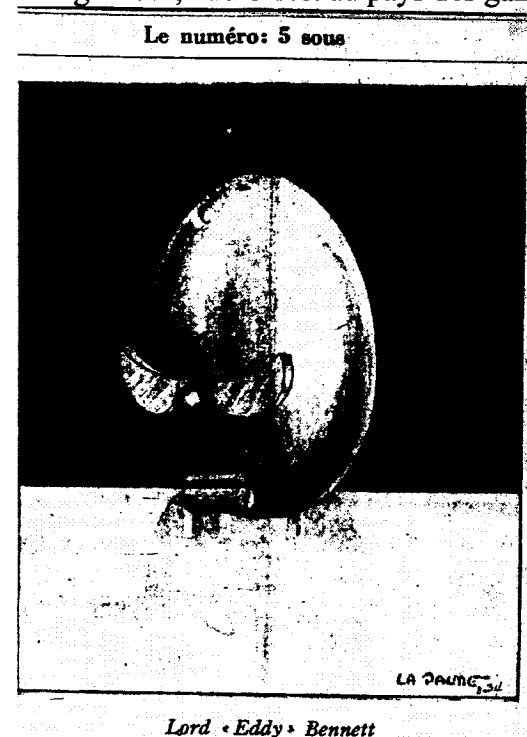


Figure 2-13  
'Lord Eddy' Bennett [Caricature of Prime Minister R. B. Bennett]. *L'Ordre*, August 4<sup>th</sup> 1934: 1.

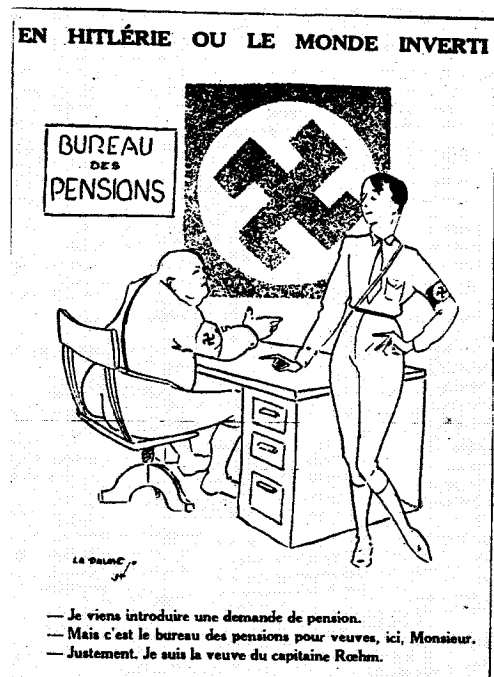


Figure 4-14  
 En Hitlerie ou le monde inversé. *L'Ordre*, November 6th 1934 : 1

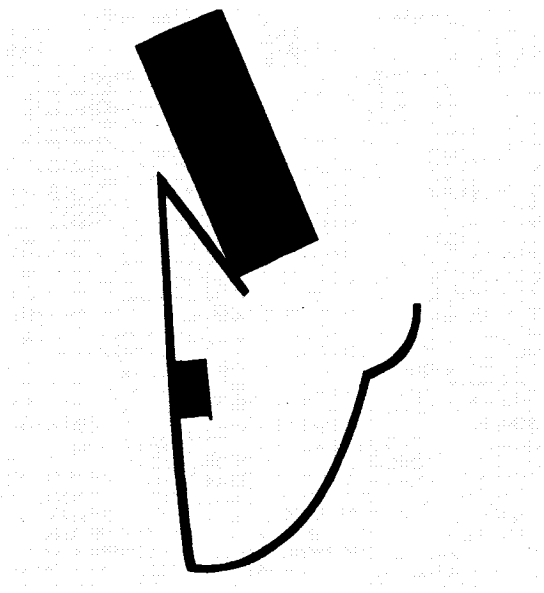


Figure 2-15  
 Caricature of Adolf Hitler. *L'Ordre*, August 22nd 1934 : 1

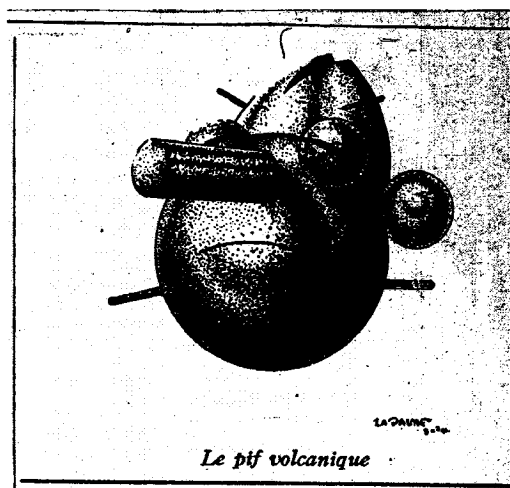


Figure 2-16  
Caricature of Camille Houde. *L'Ordre*, August 27th 1934 : 1

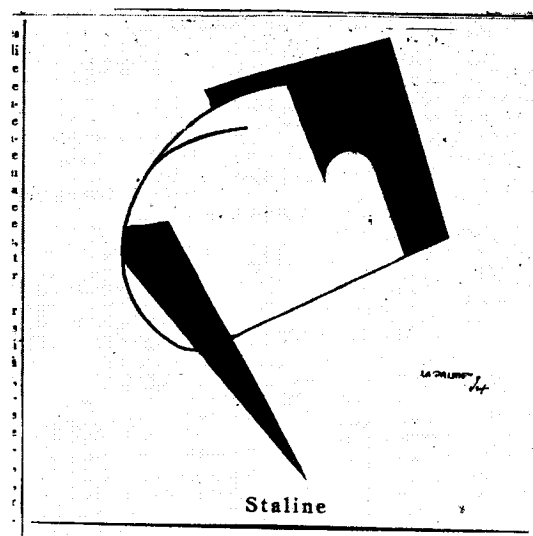


Figure 2-17  
Caricature of Josef Stalin. *L'Ordre*, September 21st 1934 : 1.

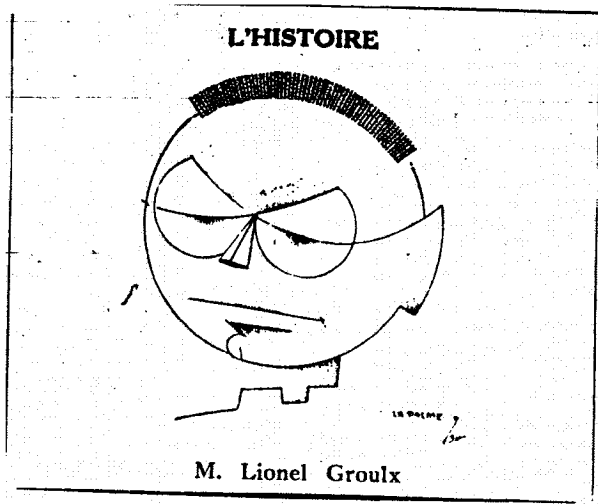


Figure 2-18

Nos gloires nationales series. L'histoire/ M. Lionel Groulx. *L'Ordre*, September 28th 1934 : 1

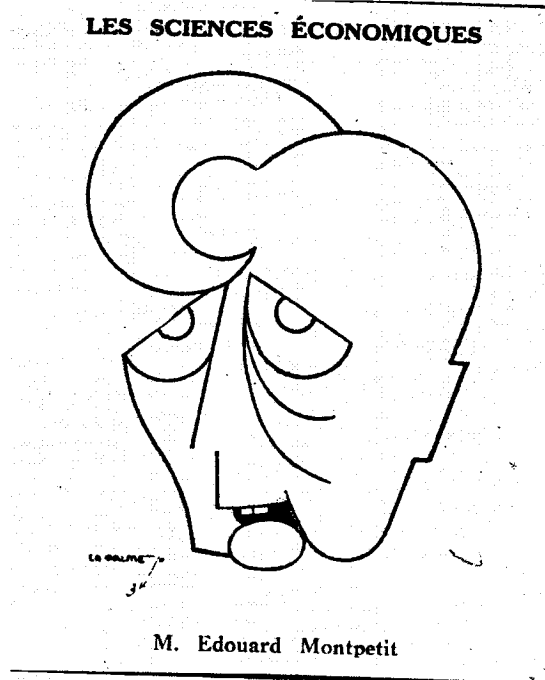


Figure 2-19

Nos gloires nationales series. Les sciences économiques/ M. Edouard Montpetit. *L'Ordre*, Octobre 10th 1934 : 1.

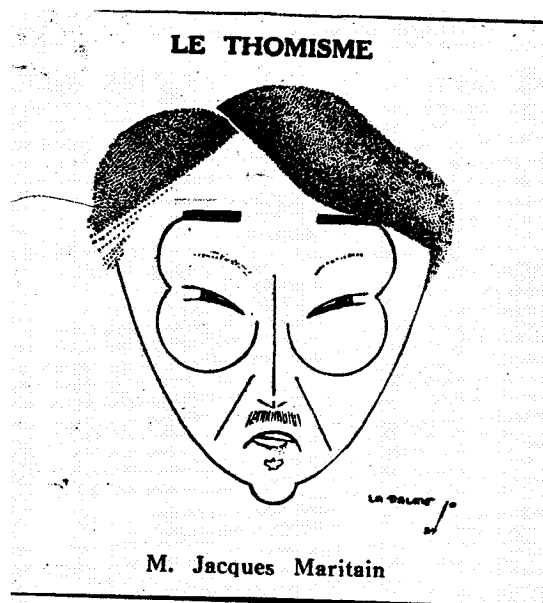


Figure 2-20

Nos gloires nationales series. Le Thomisme/M. Jacques Maritain. *L'Ordre*, October 20th, 1934 : 1.

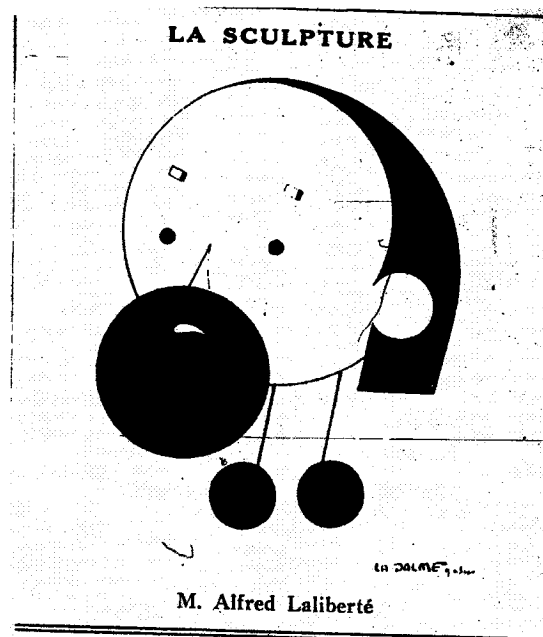


Figure 2-21

Nos gloires nationales series. La sculpture/M. Alfred Laliberté. *L'Ordre*, October 25th 1934 : 1



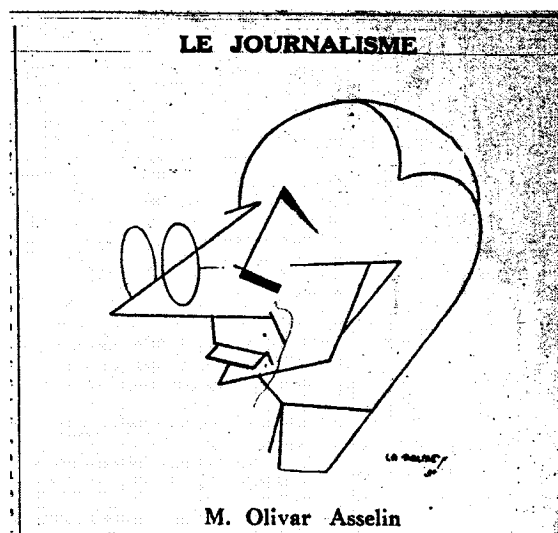


Figure 2-22

Nos gloires nationales series. Le journalisme/ M. Olivar Asselin. *L'Ordre*, November 11th 1934 : 1

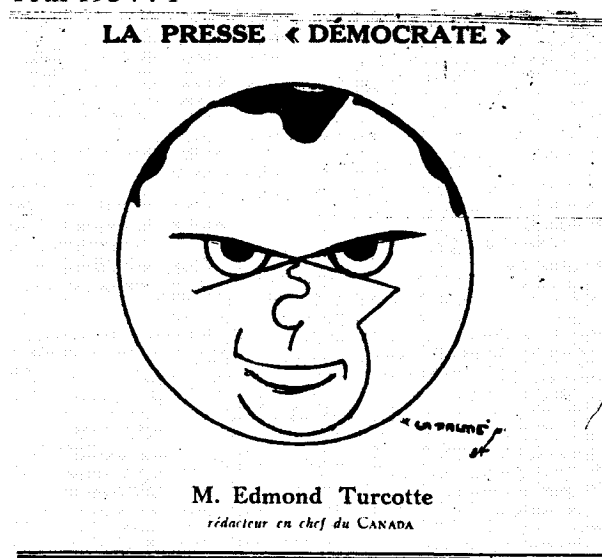


Figure 2-23

Nos gloires nationales series. La presse 'démocrate'/M. Edmond Turcotte. *L'Ordre*, November 9th 1934 : 1.



Figure 2-24  
Nos gloires nationales series. Le Romantisme/ M. Robert Choquette. *L'Ordre*, November 12th 1934 : 1

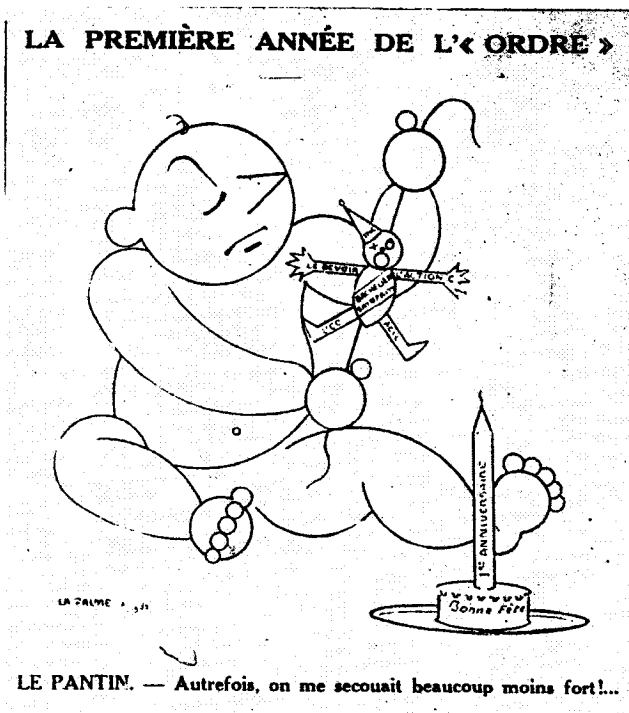


Figure 2-25  
La première année de 'L'Ordre'. *L'Ordre*, March 9th 1935 : 1.

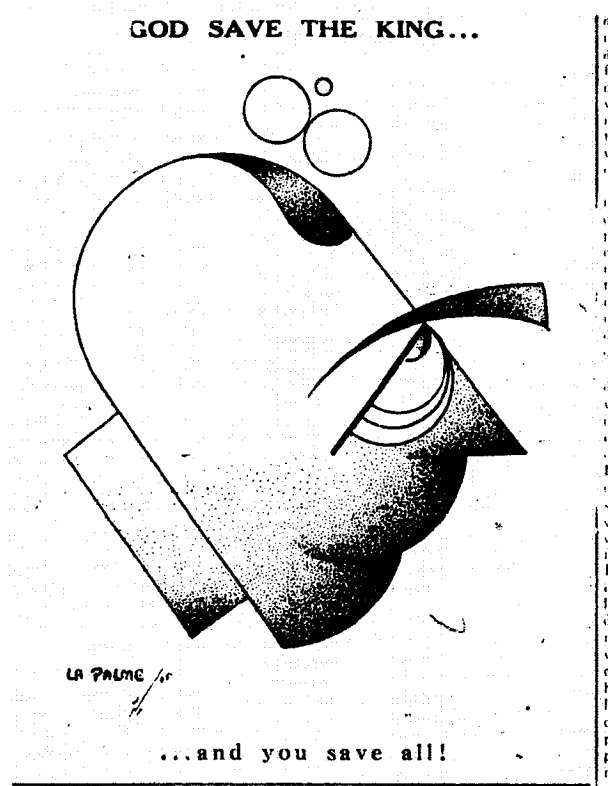


Figure 2-26

'God save the king/... and you save all!' *L'Ordre*, May 4<sup>th</sup> 1935: 1

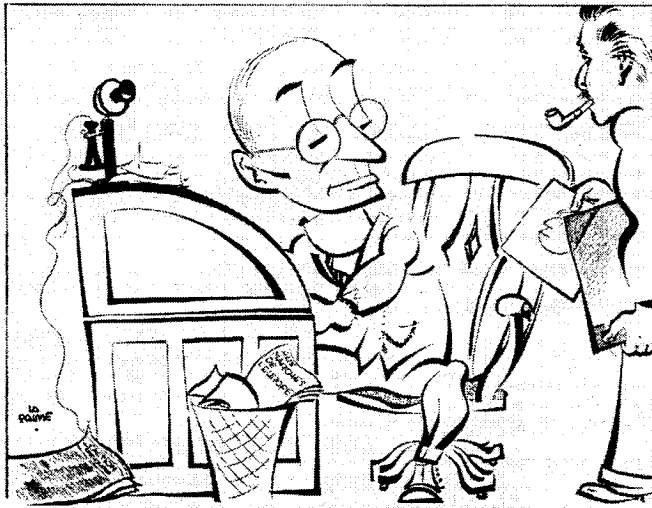


Figure 3-1  
[Caricature of Olivier Asselin with self-portrait of Robert LaPalme, from *Le Nouveau Journal*, 1962, reprinted in LaPalme (1997)]

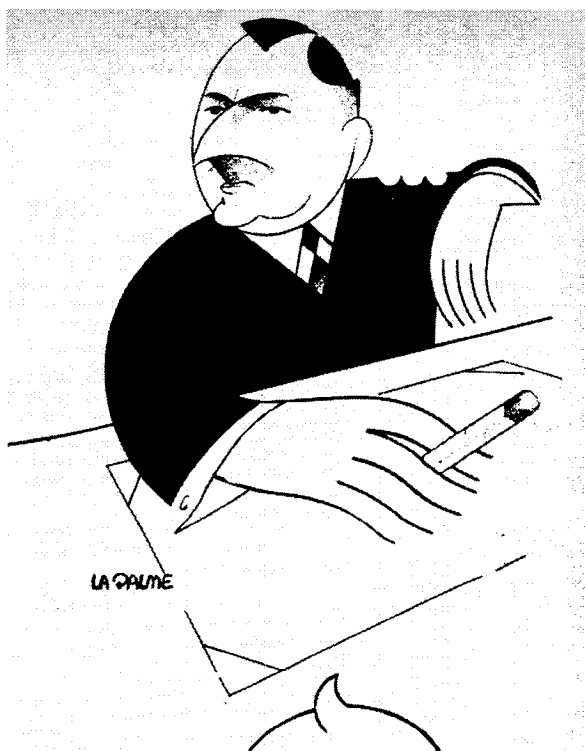


Figure 3-2  
[Caricature of Maurice Duplessis.] *Le Journal* [Québec], 1937, reprinted in LaPalme (1950): 83



Figure 3-3  
 'That Chicken à la King does not agree with me'. Caricature of Maurice Duplessis reprinted in *Time Magazine*, 1944.



Figure 3-4  
 'La clef'. *Le Canada*, 1948

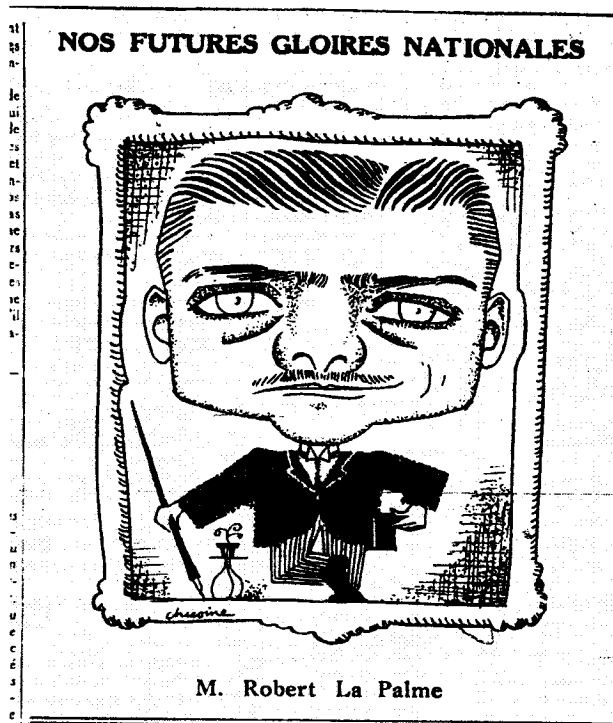


Figure 3-5  
René Chicoine, 'Nos futures gloires nationales. M. Robert LaPalme'. *L'Ordre*, January 14th 1935 : 1.

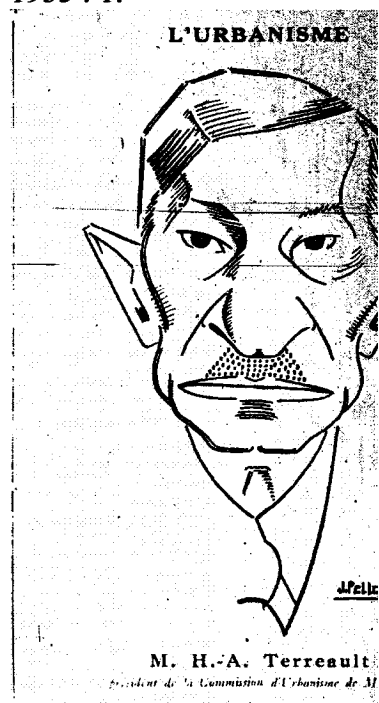


Figure 3-6  
J. Pelletier. Nos gloires nationales series. M. H. A. Terreault. *L'Ordre*, March 9th 1935: 1.

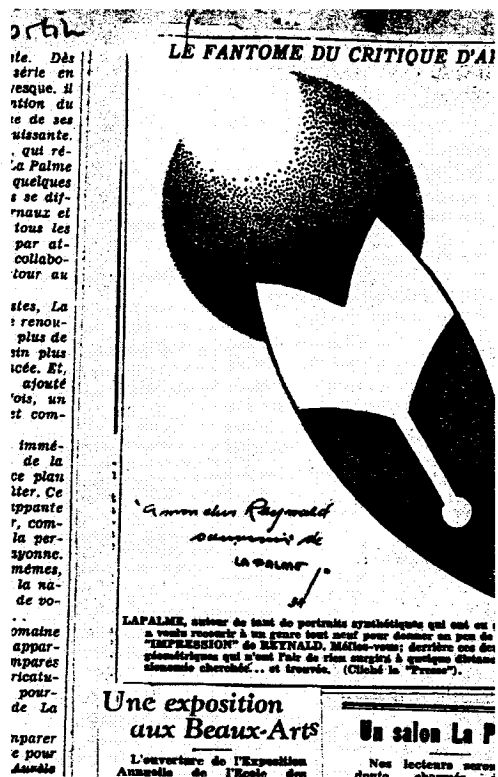


Figure 3-7  
[Caricature of Reynald, art critic of La Presse] *La Presse*, December 12<sup>th</sup> 1934.



Figure 3-8  
[Caricature of William Lyon Mackenzie King]. *La Renaissance*, 1935, reprinted in LaPalme (1950): 55.

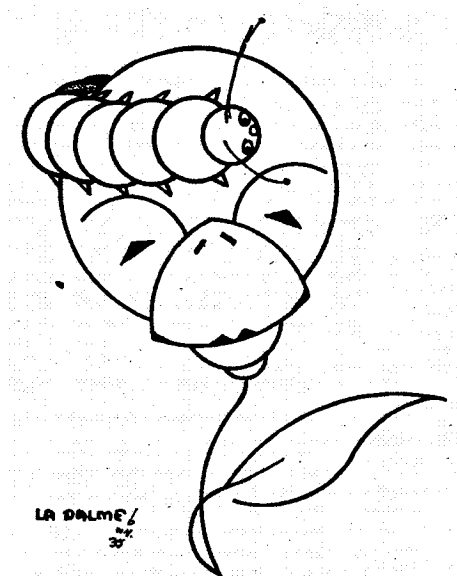


Figure 3-9  
 'Jovette/La pensée et le vers' [Caricature of poet Jovette Bernier], *La Renaissance*, 1935, reprinted in LaPalme (1950) : 56.

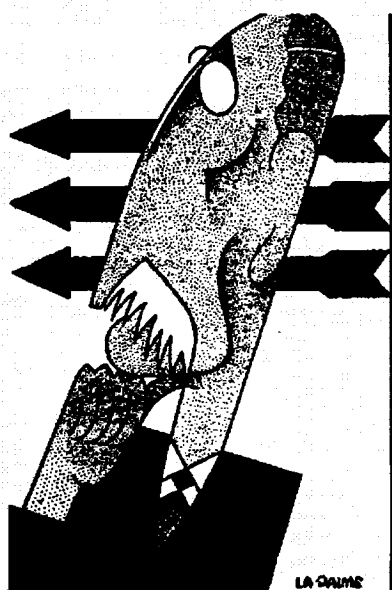


Figure 3-10  
 Caricature of Léon Blum, leader of France's Front populaire government. *Le Droit* [Ottawa] 1937, reprinted in LaPalme (1950): 68.





Figure 3-11  
Maurice Gaudreau, L'Église du Cap-de-la-Madeleine. *La Nation*, February 26th 1936 : 1



Figure 3-12  
Hélène Jobidon, Le destin de notre nation sans le séparatisme. *La Nation*, June 25th 1936 : 1



Figure 3-13

[Caricature of Adolf Hitler] *Le Journal* [Québec] 1937, reprinted in LaPalme (1950) : 82

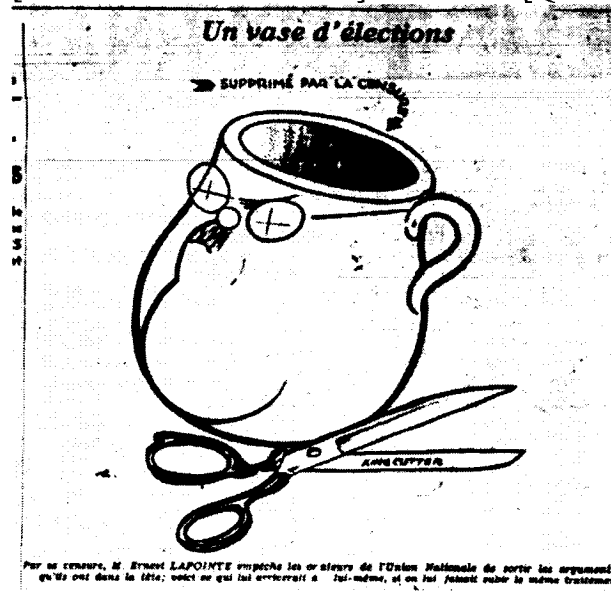


Figure 3-14

'A.' [Adolf, pseudonym of Robert LaPalme] *Un vase d'élections*. *L'Événement-Journal*, October 18th 1939 : 4.



Figure 3-15  
 'A' ['Adolf', pseudonym of Robert LaPalme][Untitled Caricature of Ernest Lapointe as Censor], *L'Événement-Journal*, October 3rd 1939: 4



Figure 3-16  
 'A' ['Adolf', pseudonym of Robert LaPalme] 'M. Lapointe censure son discours.' *L'Événement-Journal*, October 9<sup>th</sup> 1939: 4

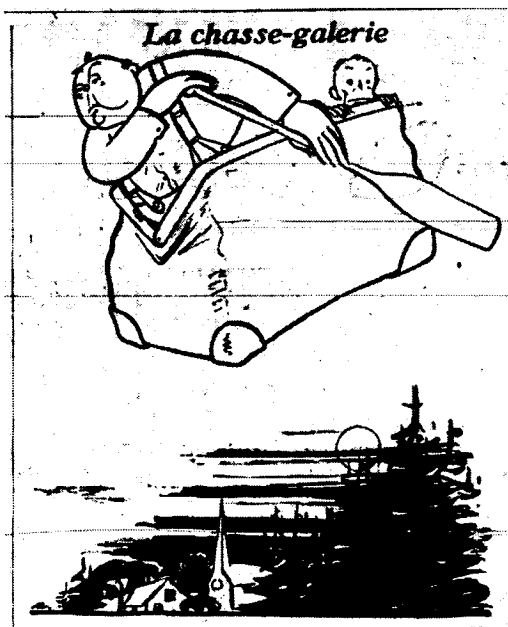


Figure 3-17

[Unsigned drawing by Robert LaPalme], La chasse-galerie [Mackenzie King and Adelard Godbout]. *L'Événement-Journal*, October 10th 1939 : 4.

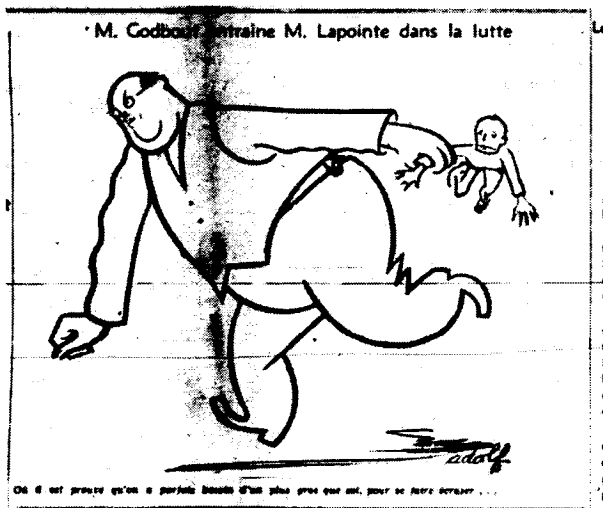


Figure 3-18

'Adolf' [pseudonym of Robert LaPalme], M. Godbout entraîne M. Lapointe dans la lutte. *L'Événement-Journal*, October 18th 1939 : 4



Figure 3-19

'Adolf' [pseudonym of Robert LaPalme], Méfiez-vous des bananes pourries. *L'Événement-Journal*, October 20th 1939 : 4

QUEBEC, 21 OCTOBRE 1939

## Les contradictions de M. Ernest Lapointe

Le grand homme n'a pas répondu à la principale question : à savoir qu'en 1935 ou 1937, il s'était engagé à ne pas démissionner la monarchie.

[illegible]

Il n'est plus question de croisée. — On a été démenti que M. Lapointe prend ses notes d'ordre à Londres.

[illegible]

C'est en étant fort nous-mêmes que nous pourrns leur venir  
à aide.

[illegible]

Le gouvernement australien décrie la conscription pour le  
1er janvier 1948 et l'engagement de Sa Majesté à Ottawa  
journaux les autres pour le service militaire obligatoire.

[illegible]

Les planteurs et les imperialistes appellent M. L. Laperle et Gifford et croient par cette agression que l'in-

Pour un peuple qui voit clair, il est abas de constater de quel côté se rangent actuellement tous les ennemis du peuple algérien, et de quel côté se rangent les amis du peuple algérien. L'ennemi du peuple algérien, c'est le régime Laptéroun-Castaing. Cela est un signe terrible qui nous montre que nous nous livrons à une lutte de vie ou de mort pour ou contre le régime Laptéroun-Castaing. Les ennemis du peuple algérien, ce sont les militaires d'Orsini et les militaires de Laptéroun. Les amis du peuple algérien, ce sont les militaires d'Orsini et les militaires de Laptéroun. Les ennemis du peuple algérien, ce sont les militaires d'Orsini et les militaires de Laptéroun. Les amis du peuple algérien, ce sont les militaires d'Orsini et les militaires de Laptéroun.

Quel sera l'effet de la guerre convergente sur les arts? La première Grande Guerre, en diminuant la production industrielle, aida nos villages en augmentant le pourcentage d'immigration.

[illegible]

Le comité intervial chargé d'étudier le problème de l'assainissement de la neige recommande ce système au conseil de la ville. — Souhaitons pour le greffage et l'achat de nouveaux matériel.

The company's financial statement is prepared in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles in the United States of America. The company's financial statement is prepared in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles in the United States of America.

24. Arthur Hays Sulzberger, President of the Board of Directors, New York Times Co.

1978, il a été élu député de la circonscription de la région de la capitale. Il a été élu député de la circonscription de la région de la capitale. Il a été élu député de la circonscription de la région de la capitale.

"A quelque chose malheur est bon" rappelle le vieux proverbe! Les secousses sismiques, mais c'est en notre pays.

[illegible]

Les critiques musicales des journaux de la métropole américaine font les plus grands éloges de notre concert, qui donnait un récital de piano au Town Hall, ces jour-  
derniers.

[illegible]

On estime à deux cents environ  
les personnes de quartier Minutino. Il  
s'agit d'un quartier d'immigrés

**LE CHÂTEAU FRANÇAIS**  
 100, rue de la Montagne, Québec  
 418 693-1111 • 1997 par excellence

433



Figure 3-21  
Et voici La Palme! *Hebdo-Laval*, student newspaper of Université Laval, 1940

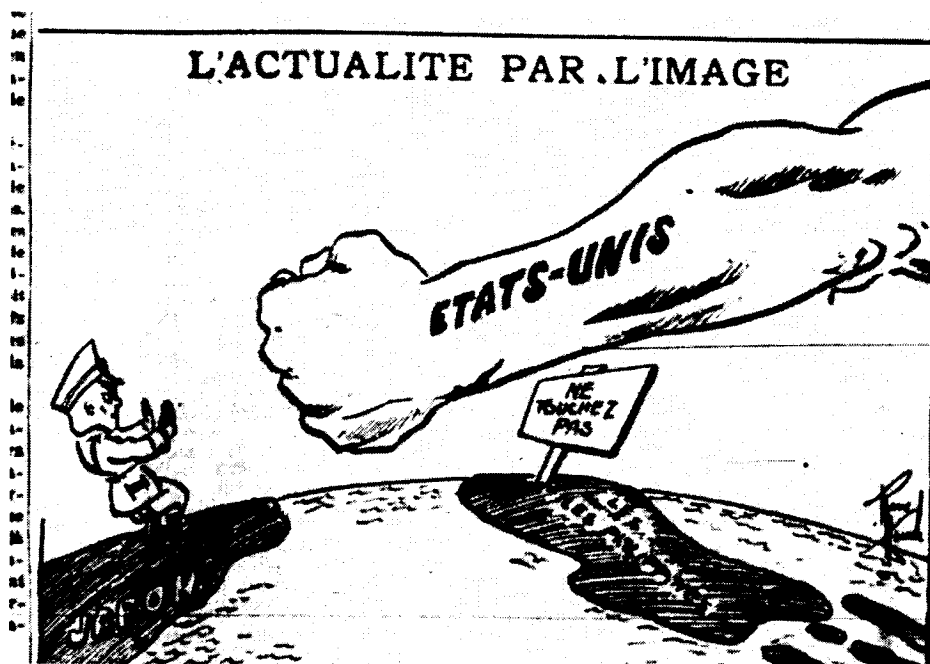


Figure 2-22  
René Houde, L'Actualité par l'image. *L'Action catholique*, September 6th 1940 : 4

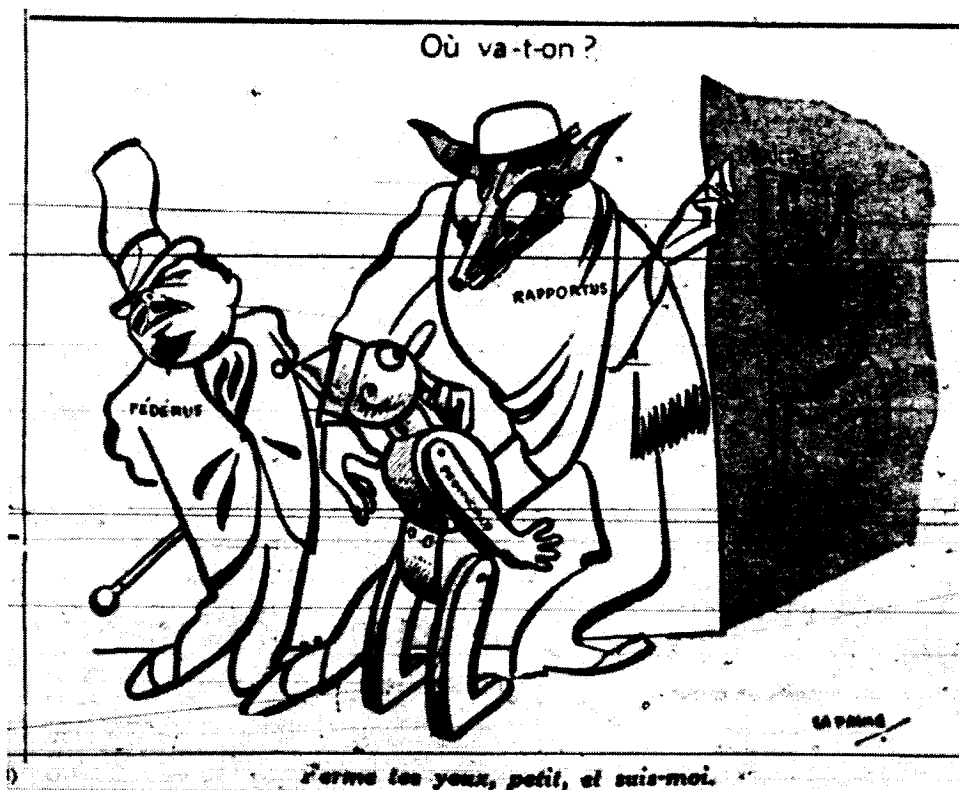


Figure 3-23

Où va-t-on? / Ferme les yeux, petit, et suis moi. *L'Action catholique*, January 10th 1941 : 1

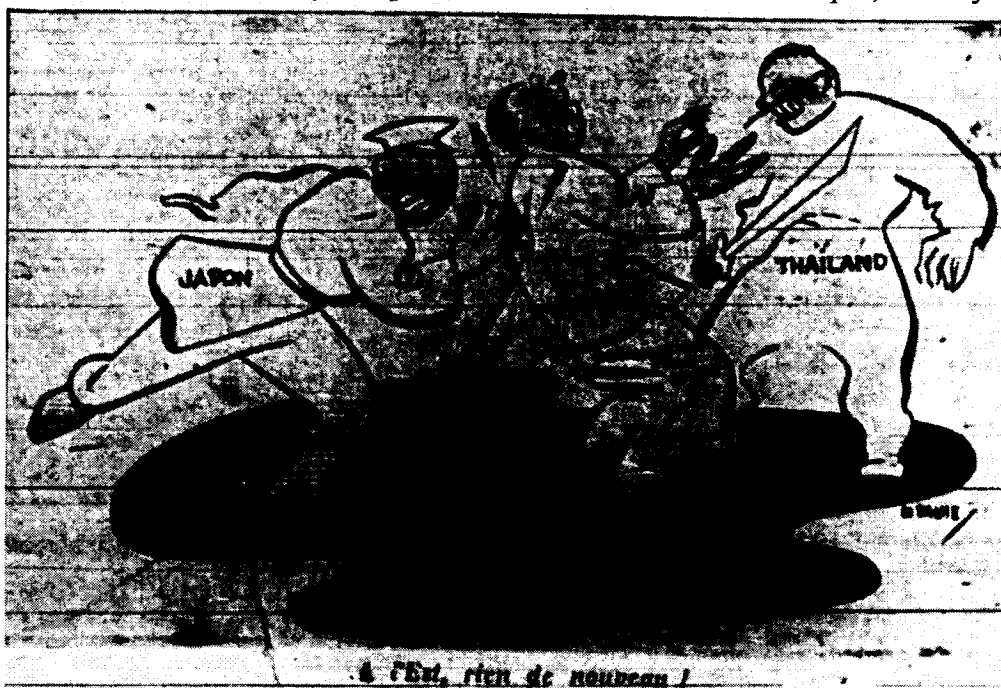


Figure 3-24

À l'est, rien de nouveau! *L'Action catholique*, March 1st 1941 : 1.



## Les marchands de pays



Figure 3-25

Les marchands de pays [former French premier Pierre Laval]. *L'Action catholique*, February 12th 1941 : 1



Figure 3-26

Advertisement, *L'Action catholique* April 4th 1941: 16.



Figure 3-27

Là où certains saluts se rencontrent. *L'Action catholique*, April 5th 1941 : 1.



Figure 4-1.  
Ce soir, à 9 heures / Le Père MARIE-ALAIN COUTURIER  
*L'Action catholique*, April 25th 1941 : 1



Figure 4-2  
Enfin Québec a ses connoisseurs/ 'Ces artistes sont pour le moins excentriques'  
*L'Action catholique*, April 26th, 1941 : 1.

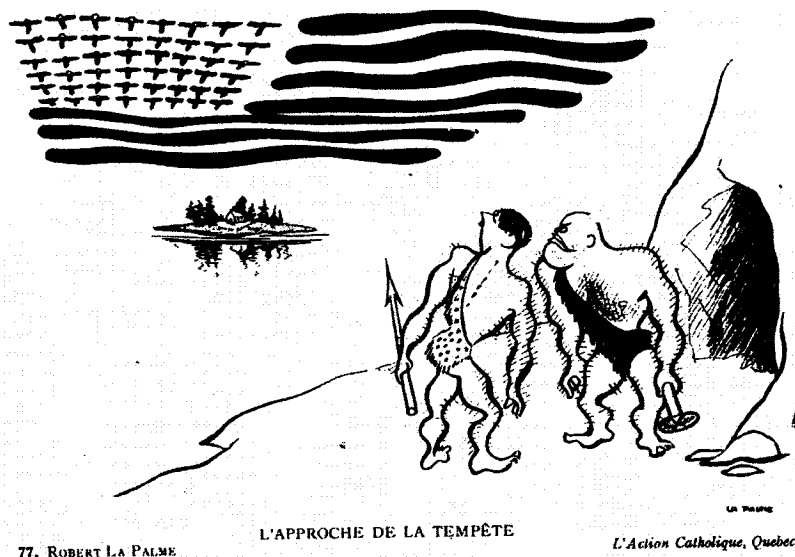


Figure 4-3  
 L'Approche de la tempête. *L'Action catholique*, 1941, reprinted in *War cartoons and Caricatures of the British Commonwealth* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1941), no. 77

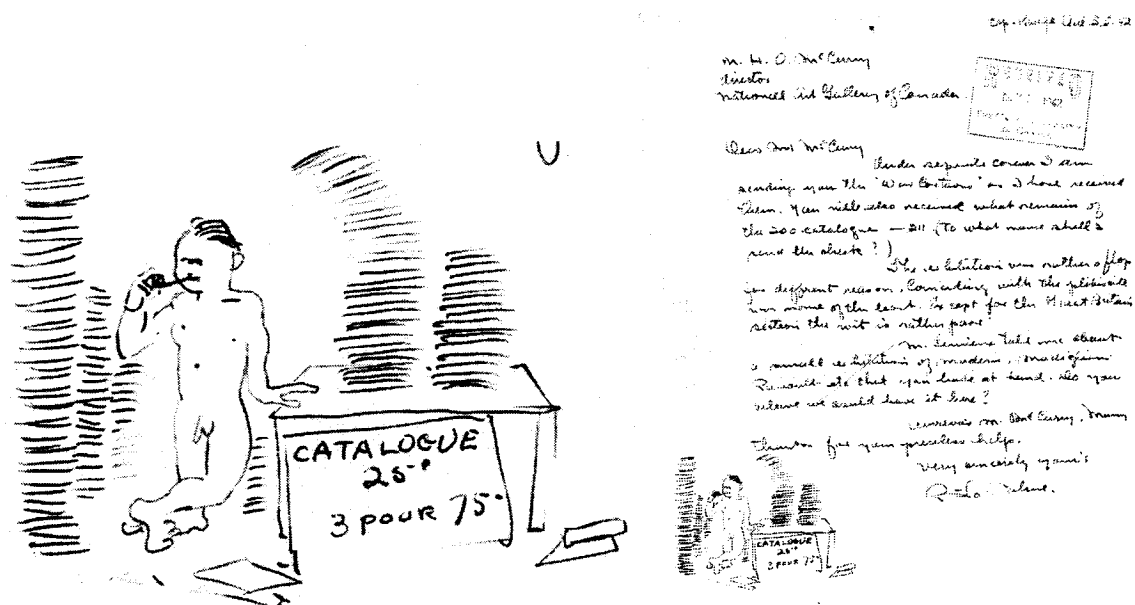


Figure 4-4  
 Self-portrait in marginal drawing to letter to H. O. McCurry, director of the National Gallery of Canada, May 5<sup>th</sup> 1942. National Gallery of Canada Archives, National Gallery of Canada Fonds 5.5W, War Cartoons and Caricatures of the British Commonwealth (file 3).



Figure 4-5.  
Nos belles traditions indigènes. *Le Canada*, Montréal, July 20 1943 : 4



Figure 4-6  
Ce n'est pas le cœur qui manque. *Le Canada*, July 14 1943 : 4

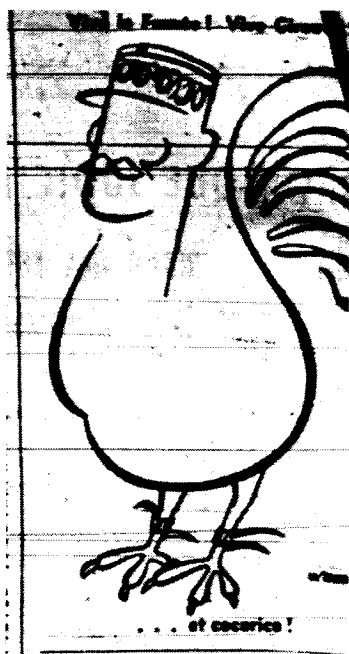


Figure 4-7

Vive la France! Vive Giraud! *Le Canada*, July 17 1943 : 4



Figure 4-8

'- Rappelons-nous, Franklin [...]' *Le Canada*, July 23 1943 : 4

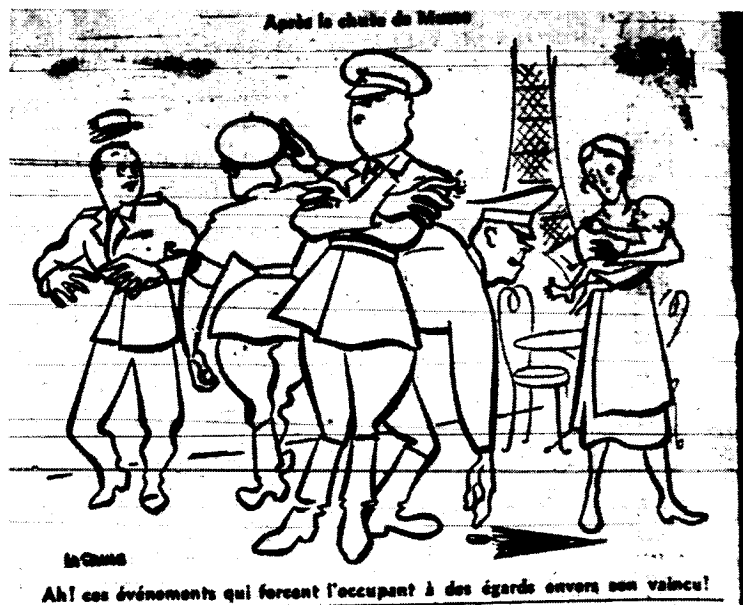


Figure 4-9  
Après la chute de Musso. *Le Canada* July 28th 1943 : 4



Figure 4-10  
[no title] 'Suivant!...' *Le Canada* July 26th 1943 : 1



Figure 4-11  
[Untitled] *Le Devoir*, June 19 1952 : 4



Figure 4-12  
Ce pauvre défunt! *Le Canada* August 3 1943 : 4





Figure 4-13

[Untitled] « Tous ces rationnements, c'est effrayant! Heureusement que l'encre n'est pas rationnée! » *Le Canada* August 4, 1943 : 4

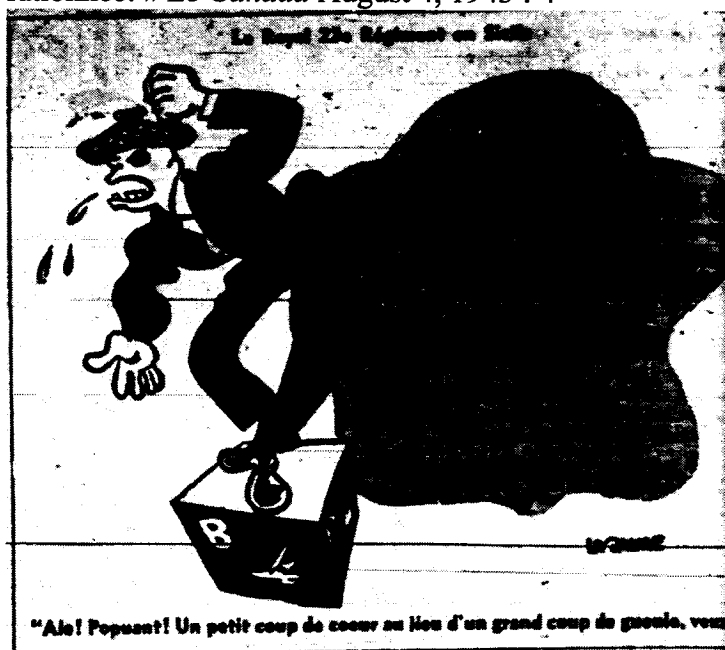


Figure 14

Le Royal 22<sup>e</sup> régiment en Sicile. *Le Canada* August 7th 1943 : 4



Figure 4-15  
Le « Big 3 » à Québec. *Le Canada* August 21 1943 : 4

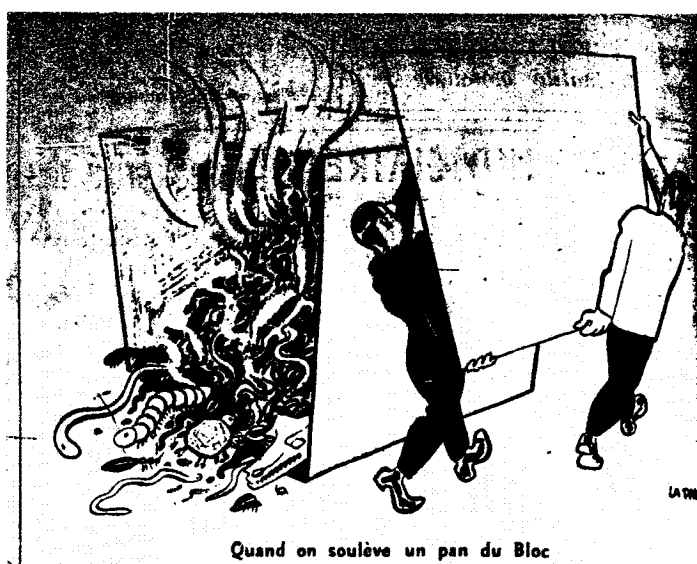


Figure 4-16  
Quand on soulève un pan du Bloc. *Le Canada* October 23 1943 : 4



Figure 17  
Le mal de Bloc. *Le Canada* October 25 1943 : 4



Figure 4-18  
Vocabulaire de guerre. *Le Canada* October 27 1943 : 4

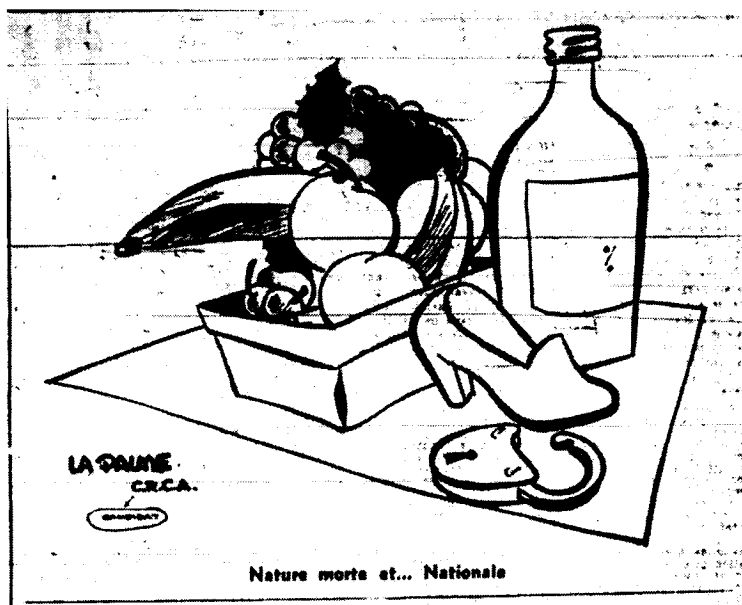


Figure 4-19  
Nature morte et... Nationale. *Le Canada* November 23 1943 : 4



Figure 4-20  
La Sainte Catherine... entre célibataires. *Le Canada* November 29 1943 : 4

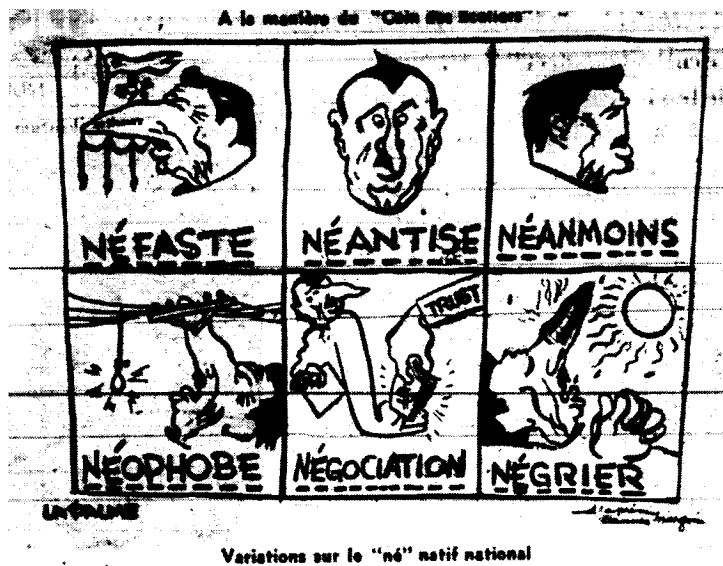


Figure 4-21

À la manière du « Coin des enfants »/ Variations sur le « né » natif national  
*Le Canada* December 1 1943: 4

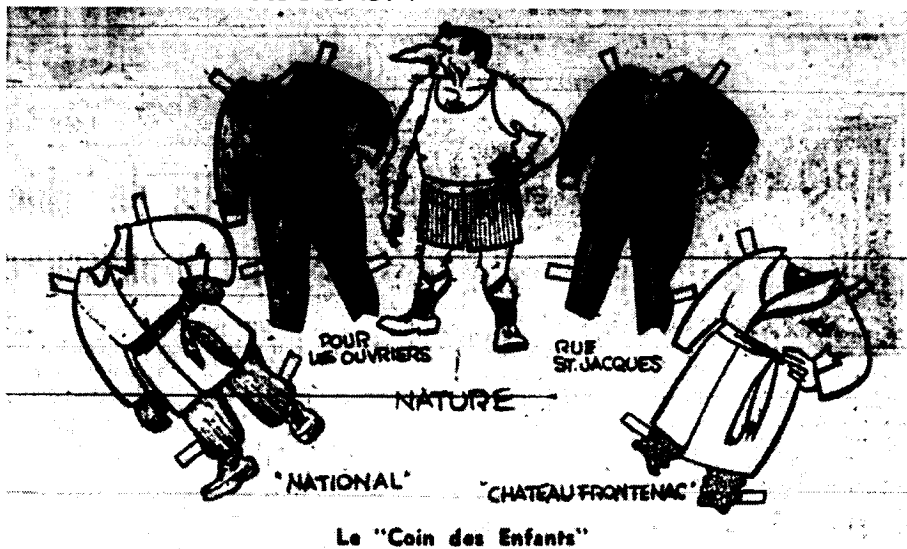


Figure 4-22

Le 'Coin des Enfants'. *Le Canada* December 4 1943 : 4

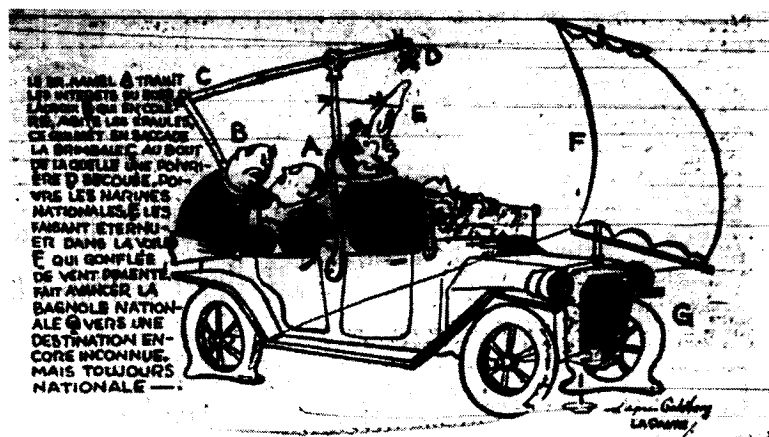


Figure 4-23

[Untitled] *Le Canada* December 7th 1943 : 4



Figure 4-24

[Untitled – Ripley's *Believe it or Not!*] *Le Canada* December 9 1943: 4

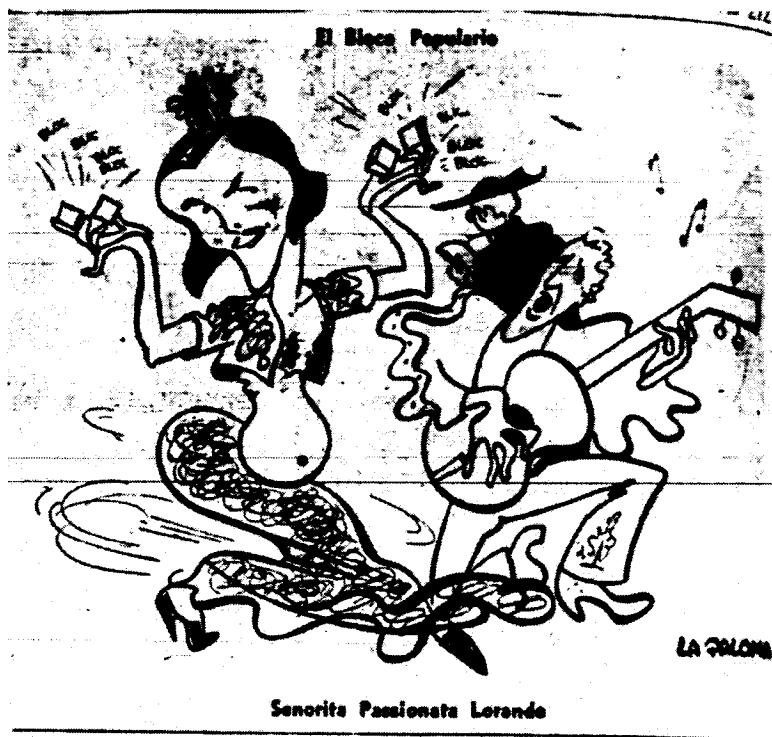


Figure 4-25

El Bloco Populario/ Senorita Passionata Lorando *Le Canada* February 24 1944: 4

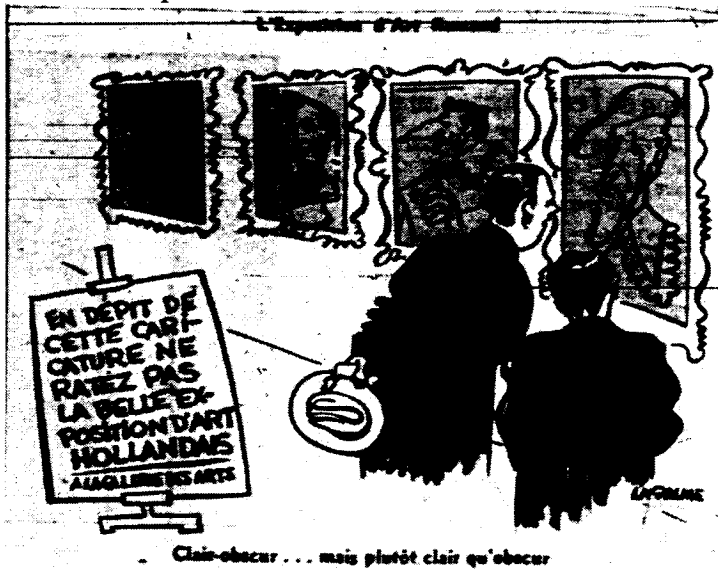


Figure 4-26

L'exposition d'art flamand/ Clair-obscur... mais plutôt clair qu'obscur  
*Le Canada* March 10 1944 : 4



Figure 27

Tu sais, mon vieux, chaque grève a son temps. *Le Canada* December 15 1943 : 4



Figure 28

Noël rue Sainte-Catherine dans l'Ouest. *Le Canada* December 23 1943 : 4





Figure 29 Qui m'inspire? *Le Canada* April 4 1944 : 4



Figure 30  
14 février / O bon saint Valentin! Faites que je me fourre le nez encore une fois dans les affaires de la province! *Le Canada* February 14th 1944: 4



Figure 31

À l'ombre des jeunes bloqueux en fleur/ Aïe! Que c'est traître, le printemps...!  
*Le Canada* April 19 1944 : 4

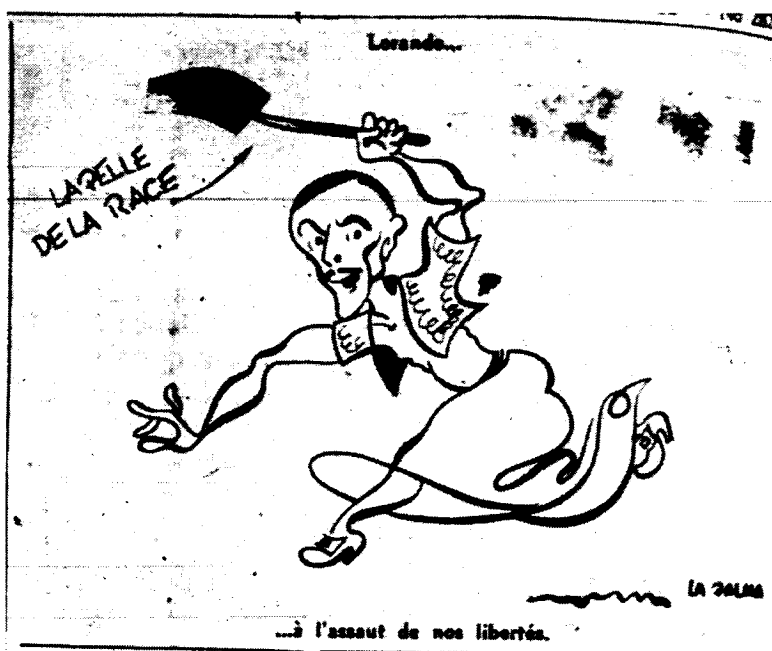


Figure 32

Lorando... / à l'assaut de nos libertés. *Le Canada* March 7 1944 : 4



Figure 33  
Politique en ligne droite (taquaouère!) *Le Canada* June 22 1944

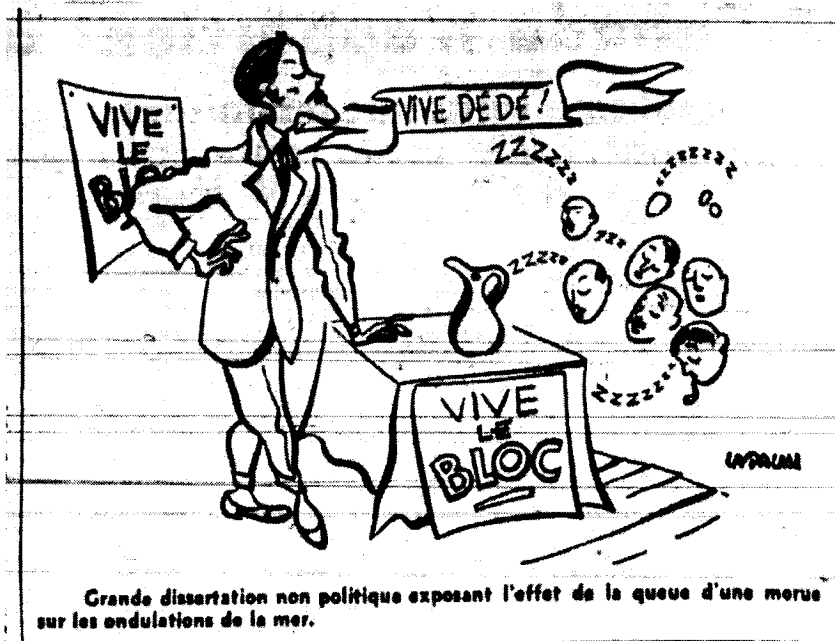


Figure 4-34  
Grande dissertation non politique... *Le Canada* May 4 1944 : 4



Figure 4-35

Attention! Elle a un reliquat de bourgeoisisme! *Le Canada* July 10 1944 : 4



Figure 4-36

[Duplicité] *Le Canada* May 8th 1944: 4

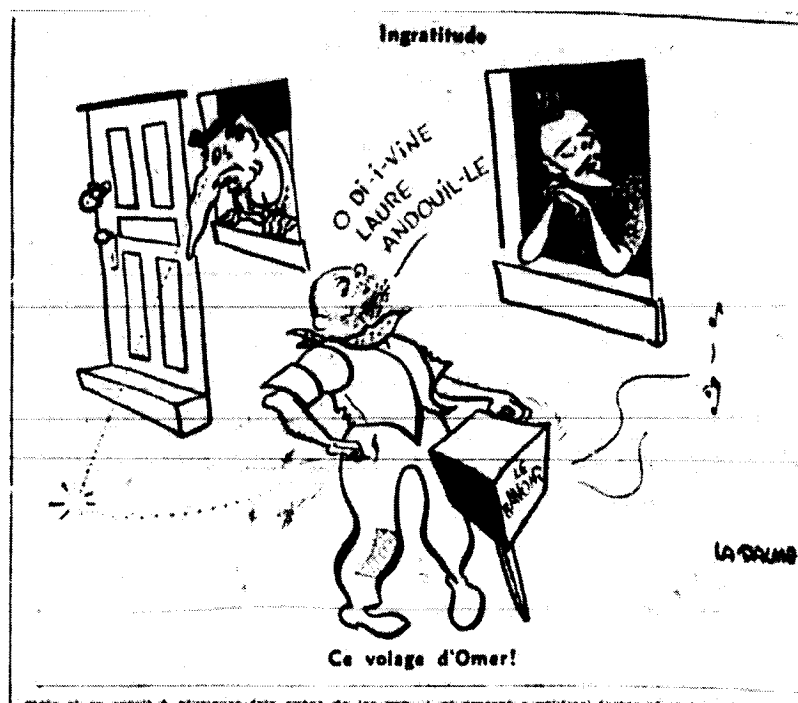


Figure 4-37

Ingratitudo/ Ce volage d'Omer! *Le Canada* July 13 1944 :



Figure 4-38

Barbe-bleue. *Le Canada* May 9 1944 : 4



Figure 4-39  
La fille mal gardée. *Le Canada* August 19 1944 : 4



Figure 4-40  
Baptiste 44 *Le Canada* July 11 1944 : 4

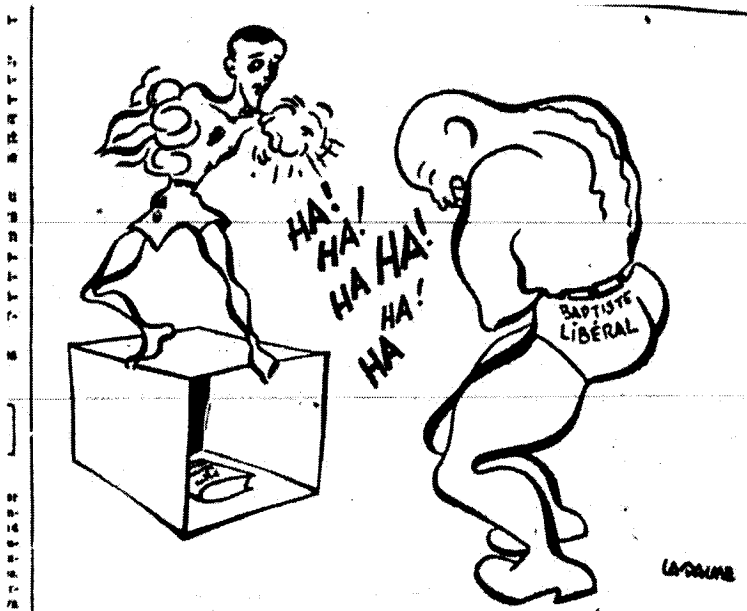


Figure 4-41

[Untitled – Baptiste Libéral laughs at Laurendeau]  
*Le Canada*  
 July 19 1944: 4



Figure 4-42  
 Une autre duplicité. *Le Canada* March 20 1944 : 4



Figure 4-43

À la recherche d'un toit. *Le Canada* December 14 1943 : 4

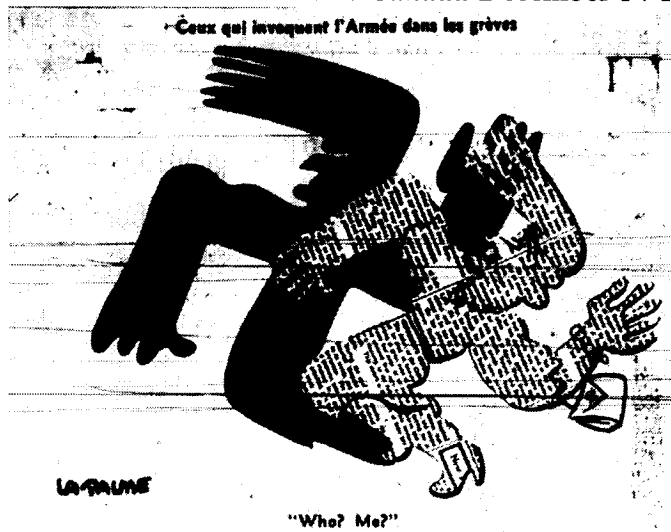


Figure 4-44

Ceux qui invoquent l'Armée dans les grèves/ 'Who? Me?'  
*Le Canada*  
 December 20 1943 : 4





Figure 4-45  
[Ah! Sacré nous-aut'es!] *Le Canada* May 19 1944 : 4

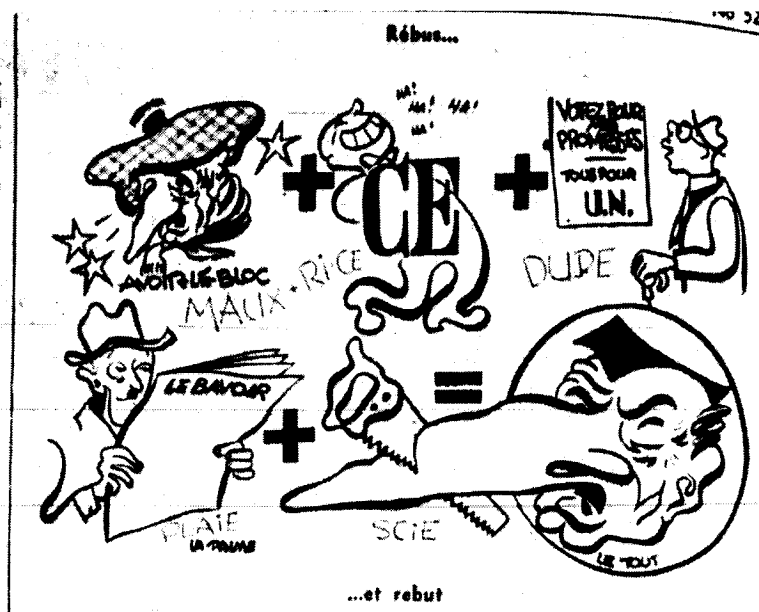


Figure 4-46  
Rébus.../... et rebut. *Le Canada* June 5 1944 : 4

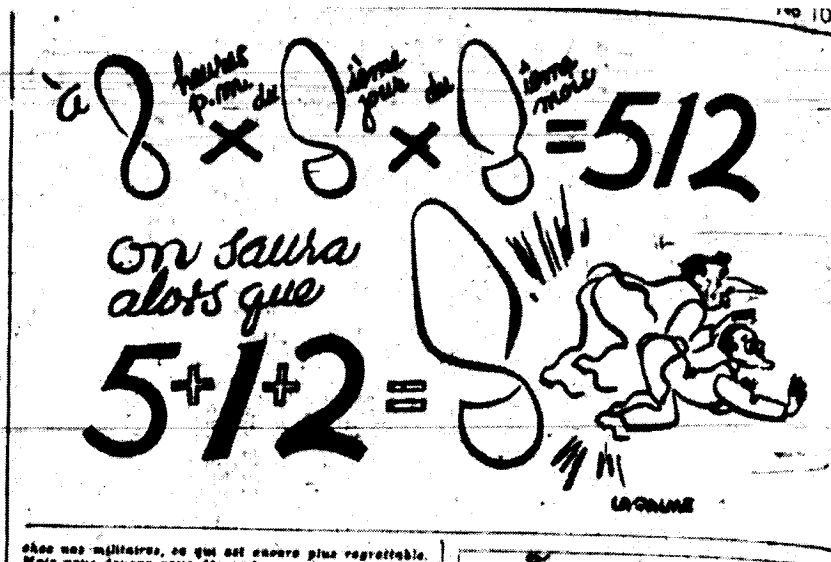


Figure 4-47  
[Untitled]. *Le Canada* August 7, 1944 : 4



Figure 4-48  
« ...et n'oubliez jamais, Mesdames et Messieurs.... »  
*Le Canada*  
August 4 1944 : 4



Figure 4-49  
 « Politique en ligne droite? » *Le Canada* March 7 1944 : 4



Figure 4-50  
 L'hydromètre « national » *Le Canada*. March 15 1944 : 4



Figure 51  
Quand le bain est tiré, il faut le boire. *Le Canada*. April 18 1944 : 4

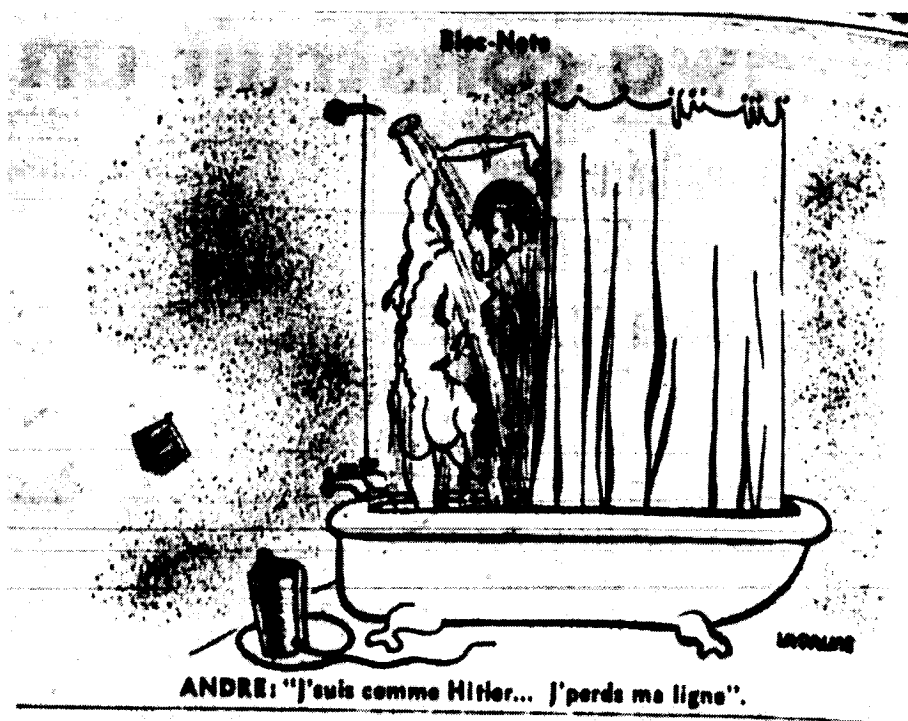


Figure 4-52  
Bloc-Note. *Le Canada* May 31 1944 : 4



Figure 4-53  
 "Je les ai tenues mes promesses!" *Le Canada* July 29 1944 : 4



Figure 4-54  
 André Laurendeau. *Le Nouveau Monde Illustré*, August 1944.



Figure 4-55  
Maurice Duplessis. *Le Nouveau Monde Illustré*, August 1944.



Figure 4-56  
Adélard Godbout. *Le Nouveau Monde Illustré*, August 1944.



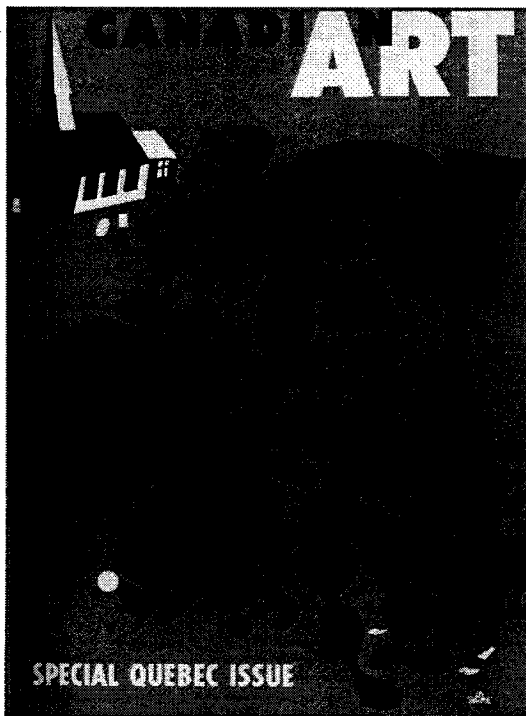


Figure 4-59  
Cover of *Canadian Art*, Winter 1948



Figure 4-60  
Alfred Pellán and Jean Drapeau, 1956 *Le Devoir* caricature reprinted in LaPalme (1997).



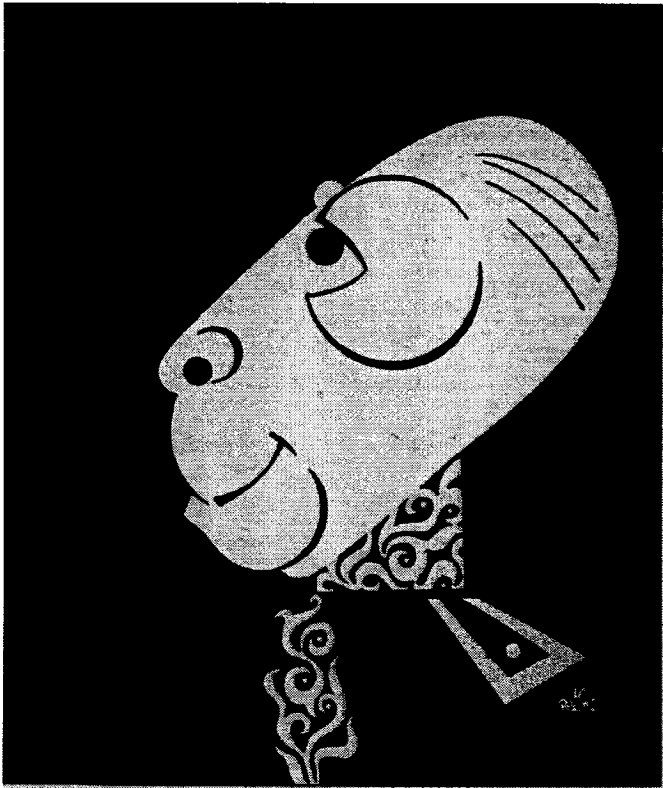


Figure 4-61

Caricature of Jean Désy, cover for *La Nouvelle relève* 1947, reprinted in LaPalme (1950) : 139



Figure 5-1  
Unattributed caricature of Maurice Duplessis. Collection of the Fondation Robert LaPalme, Montréal.

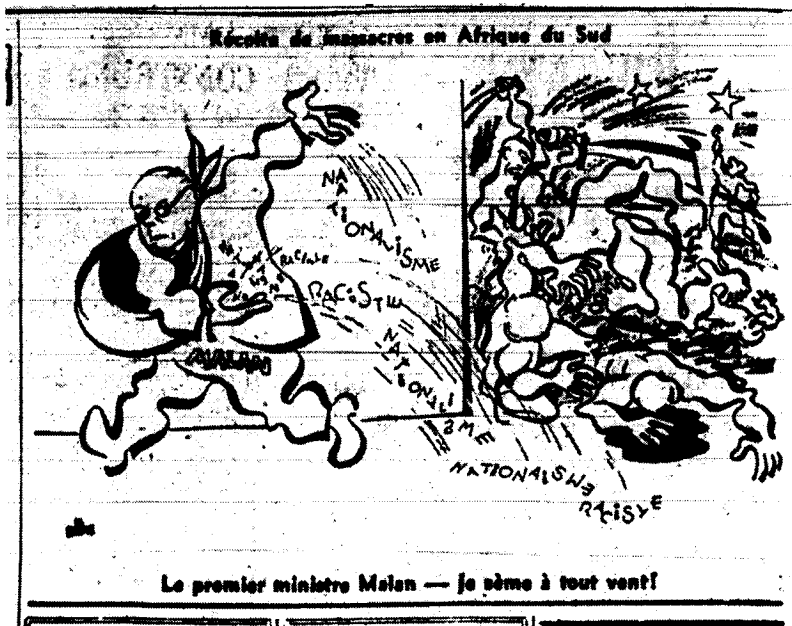


Figure 5-2  
Récolte de massacres en Afrique du Sud. *Le Canada*, January 19th 1949



Figure 5-3

[Caricature of Maurice Duplessis sowing censorship, reaction, bad faith, etc.)  
*Le Canada* March 11<sup>th</sup> 1949

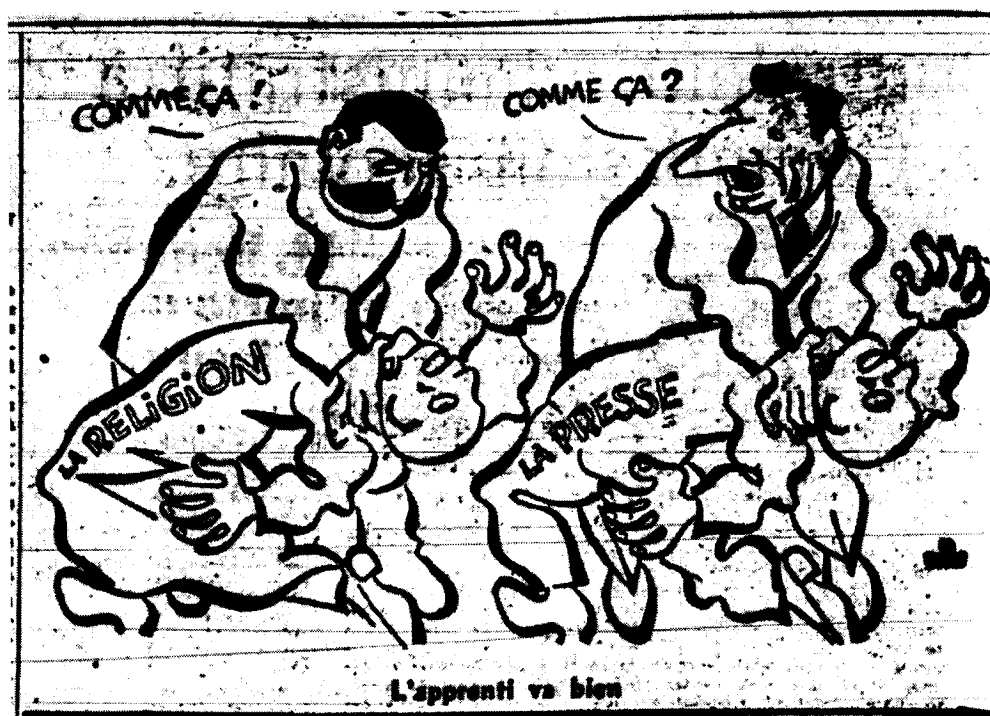


Figure 5-4

L'apprenti va bien. *Le Canada*, February 22nd 1949 : 4



Figure 5-5  
Voulez vous madame avec Antonio... *Le Canada*, March 23rd 1949 : 4



Figure 5-6  
Autre affaire de prêt-bail. *Le Canada*, March 25th 1949 : 4.



Figure 5-7  
 À Asbestos. *Le Canada*, April 20th 1949 : 4.

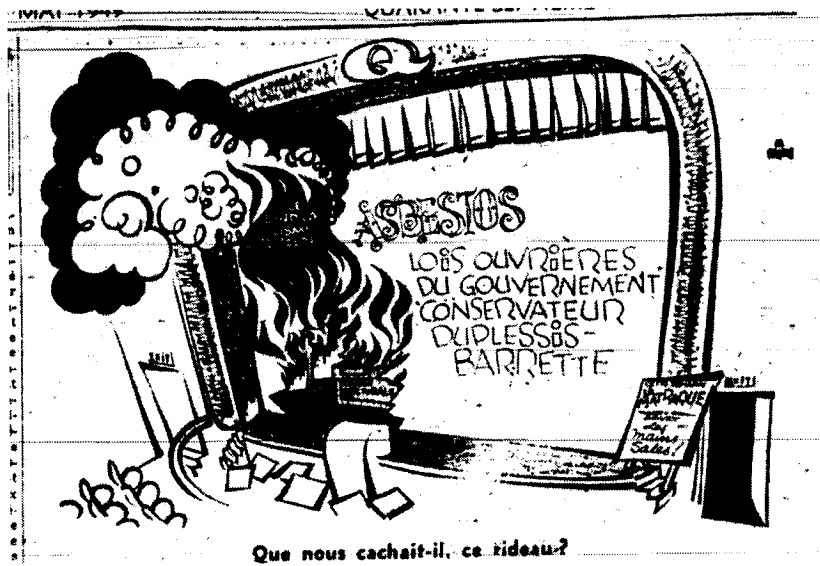


Figure 5-8  
 Que nous cachait-il, ce rideau? *Le Canada*, May 10th 1949 : 4.



Figure 5-9

Le totem du dernier Tory. *Le Canada*, June 22nd 1949 : 4.



Figure 5-10  
Il mord la main qui l'a nourri! *Le Canada*, June 11th 1949: 4

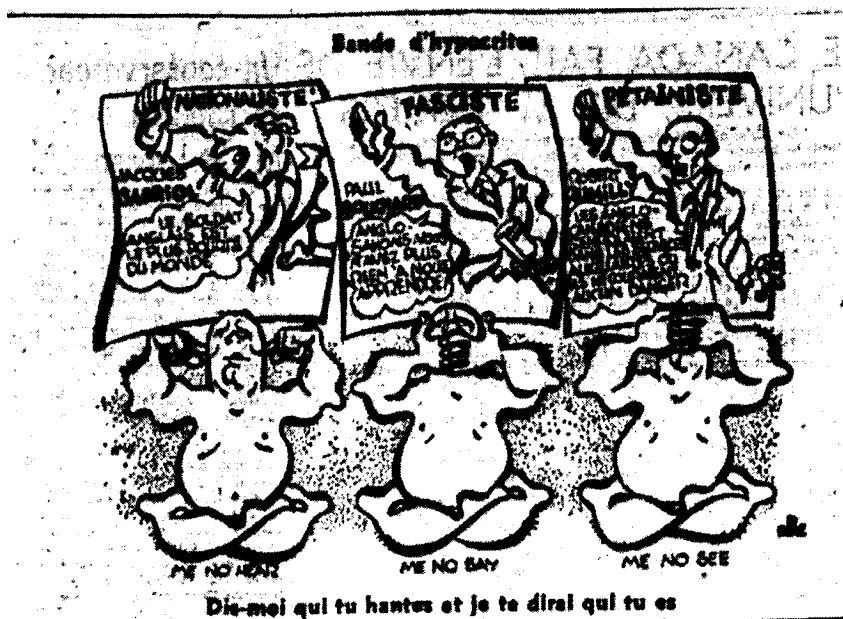


Figure 5-11  
Bande d'hypocrites. *Le Canada*, June 23rd 1949 : 4.

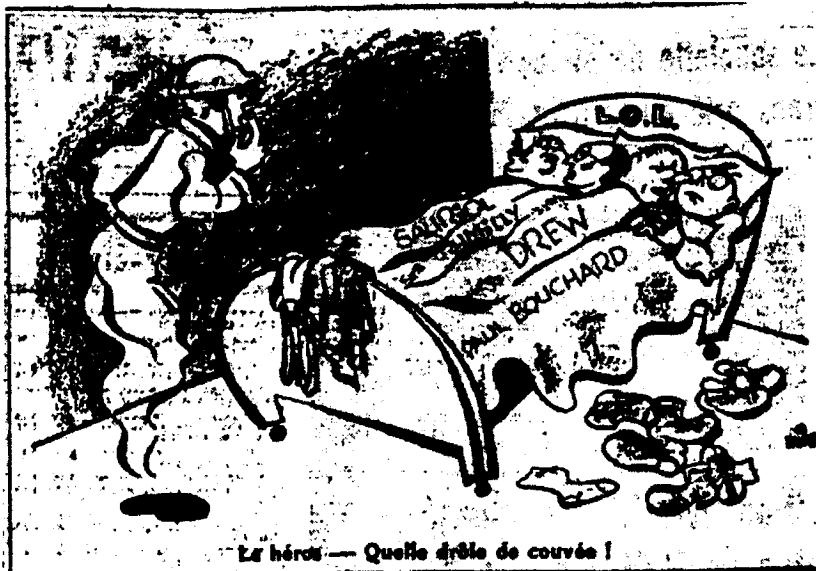


Figure 5-12

Le héros — quelle drôle de couvée. *Le Canada*, June 27th 1949 : 4.

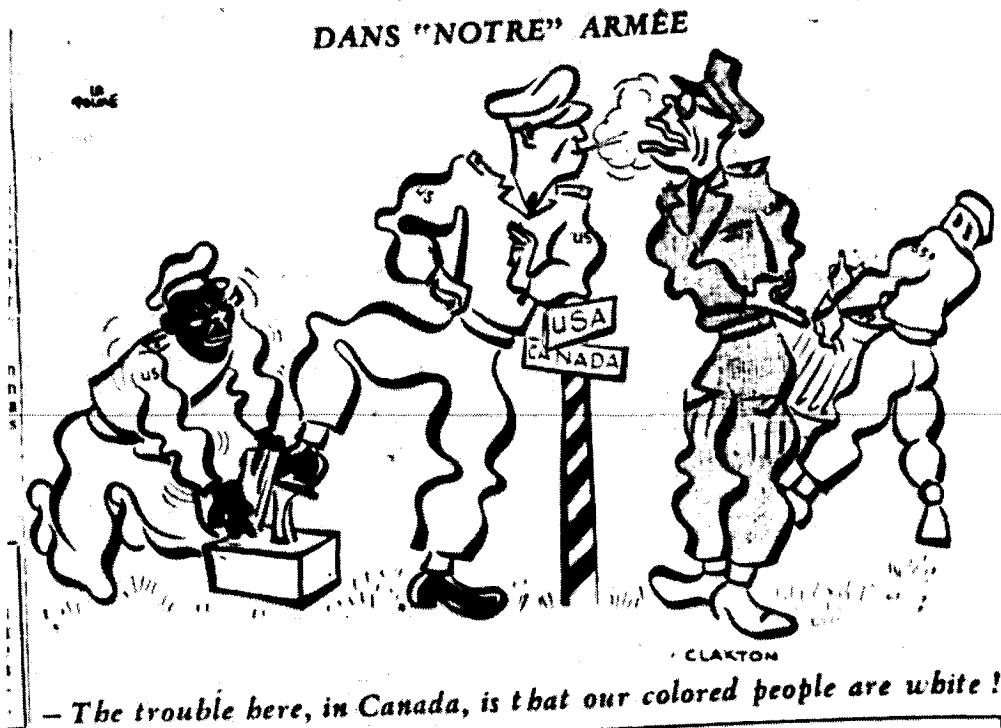


Figure 5-13

Dans 'notre' armée. *Le Devoir*, June 14th 1951 : 4





L'HISTOIRE DU CANADA EN QUELQUES FIONS...

Figure 5-14  
 'Cler', L'histoire du Canada en quelques fions..., from *Quartier Libre* . Reprinted in Desbiens (2000) : 186.



Figure 5-15  
 Les fantaisies d'un artiste. ... *Denrées périssables* (1950) : 15

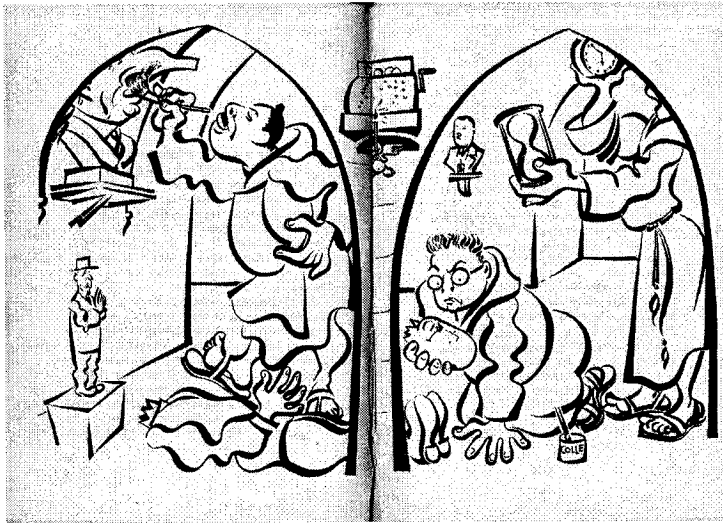


Figure 5-16  
Les frères convers. ... *Denrées périssables* (1950) : 20-21.

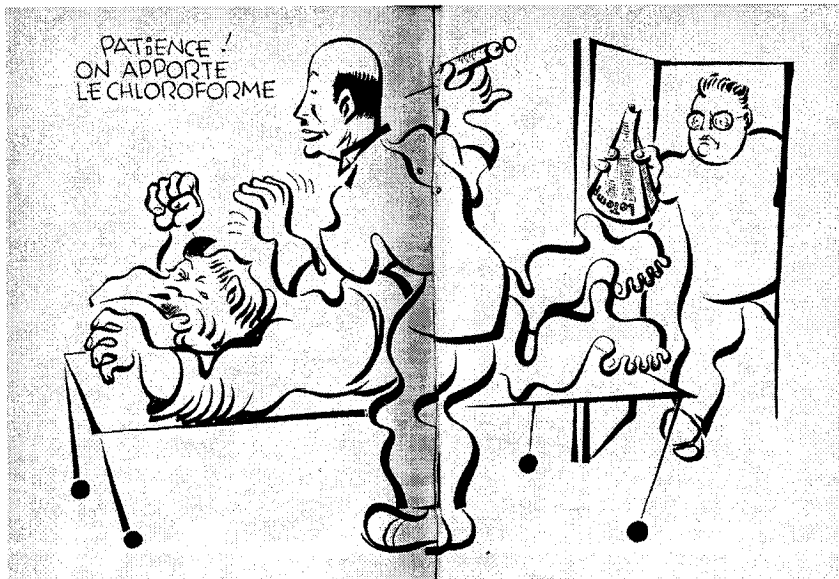


Figure 5-17  
Le devoirose... *Denrées périssables* (1950) : 92-93

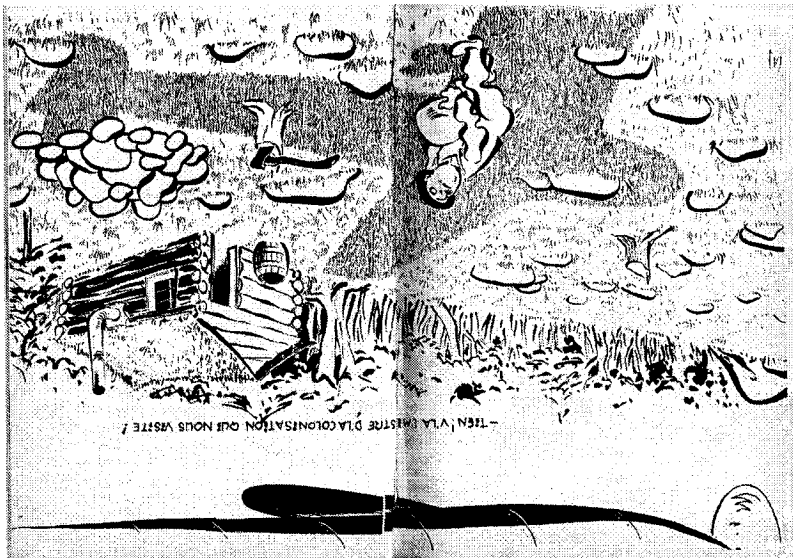


Figure 5-18  
Baptême de l'air. ... *Denrées périssables* (1950) : 108-109

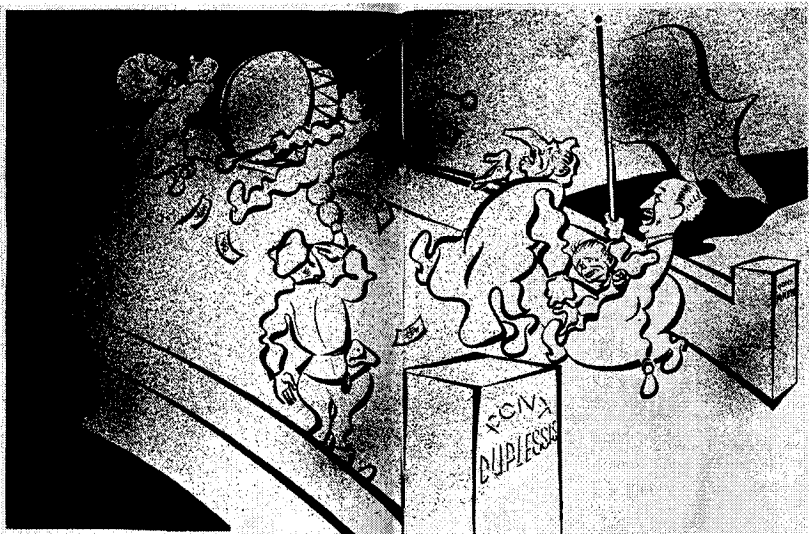


Figure 5-19  
Le pont de l'immortalité. ... *Denrées périssables* (1950) : 156-157



Figure 5-20  
Denrées périssable. ... *Denrées périssables* (1950) : 116-117.



Figure 5-21  
Ça doit être embêtant d'être Dieu. ... *Denrées périssables* (1950) : 100-101

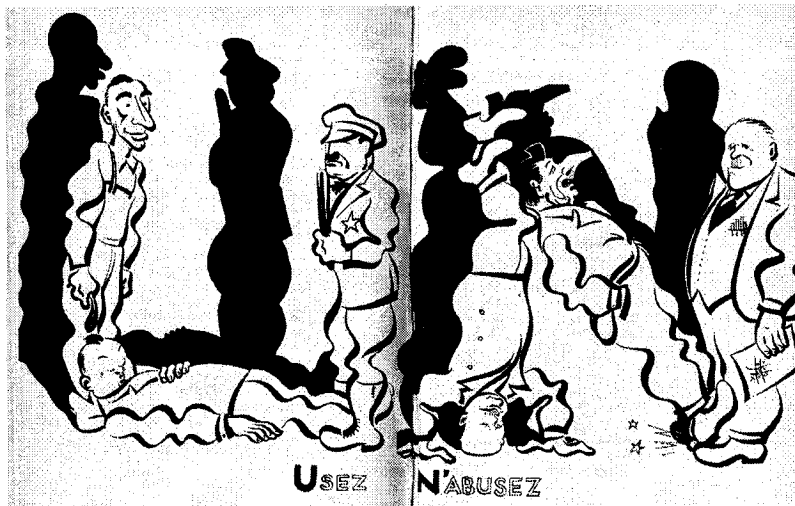


Figure 5-22  
Les sigles du chef. ... *Denrées périssables* (1950) : 84-85



Figure 5-23  
Les nègres de qualité. ... *Denrées périssables* (1950) : 68-69

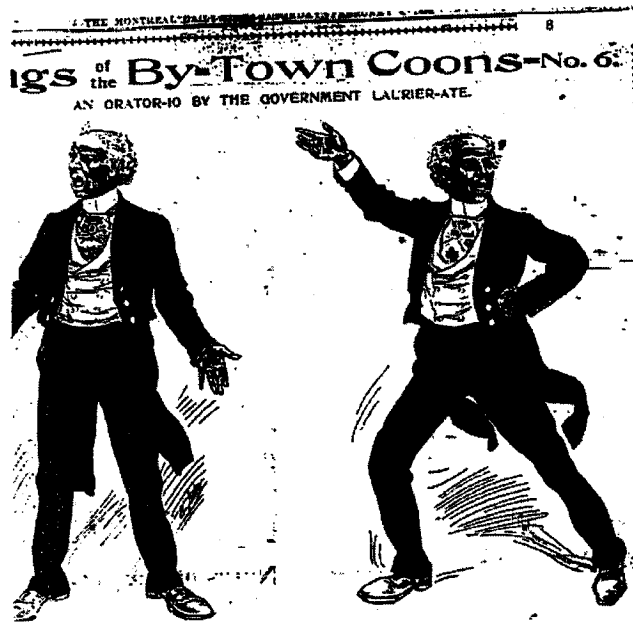


Figure 5-24

Henri Julien, Songs of the By-Town Coons. An oratorio by the government Laurier-ate. *Montreal Daily Star*, February 4 1899 p 4.

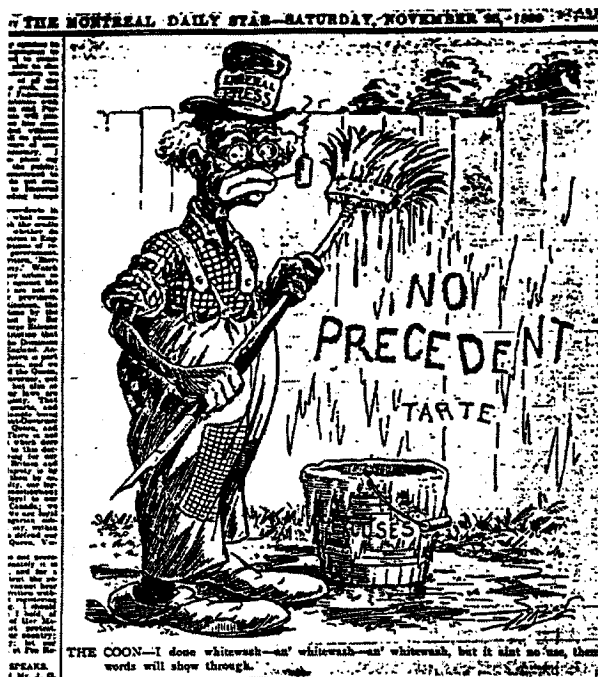


Figure 5-25

Arthur George Racey, "The Coon". *Montreal Daily Star*, November 25 1899 p 10.

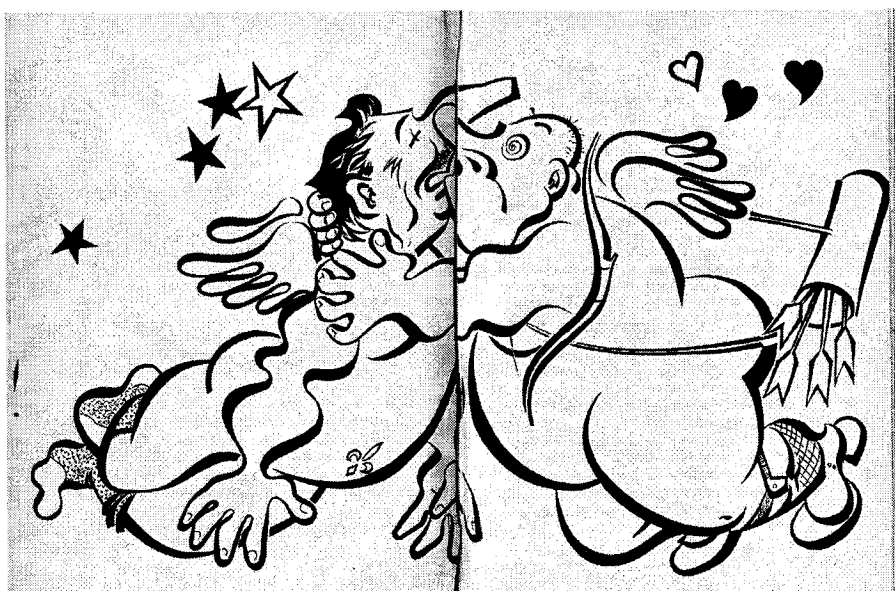


Figure 5-26

L'étreinte mortelle. ... *Denrées périssables* (1950) : 52-53

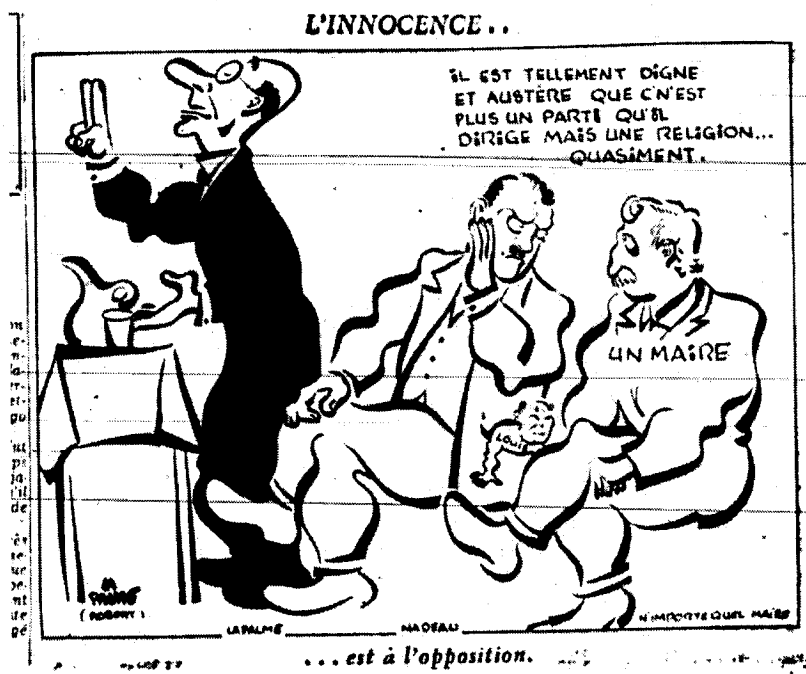


Figure 5-27  
L'innocence... est à l'opposition. *Le Devoir*, March 18th 1953: 4

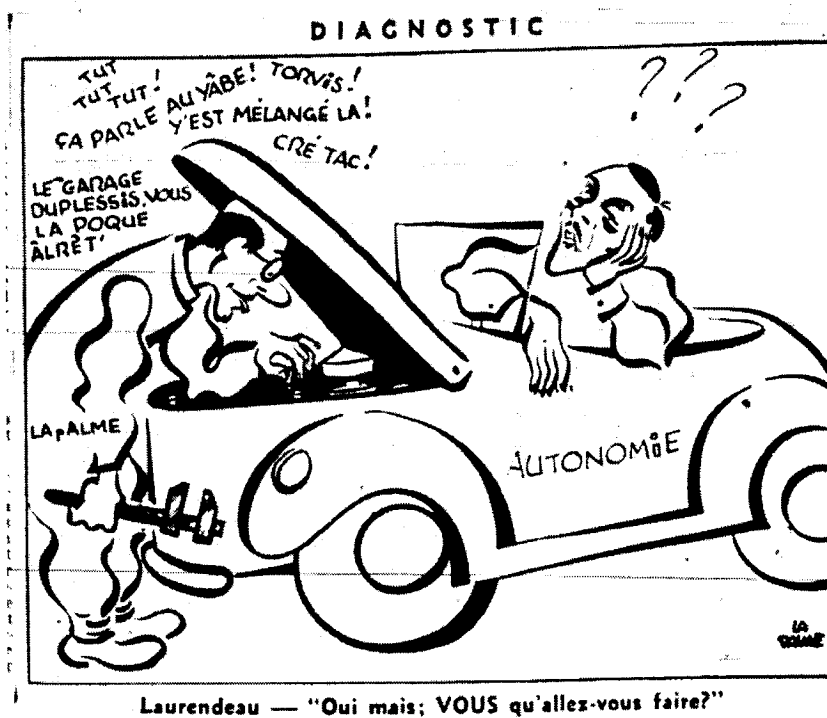


Figure 5-28  
Diagnostic. *Le Devoir*, March 26th 1952 : 4



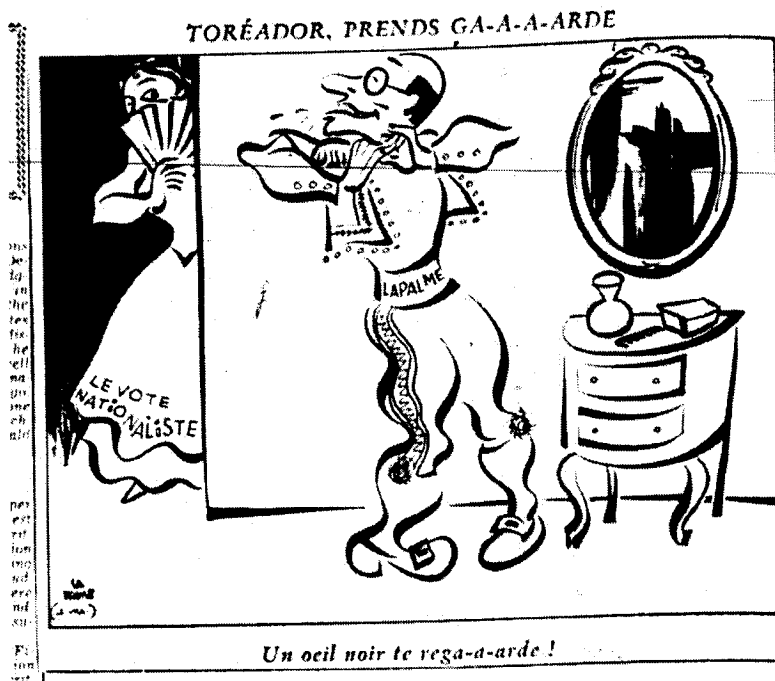


Figure 5-29  
Toréador, prends ga-a-a-a-arde. *Le Devoir*, April 5th 1952 : 4

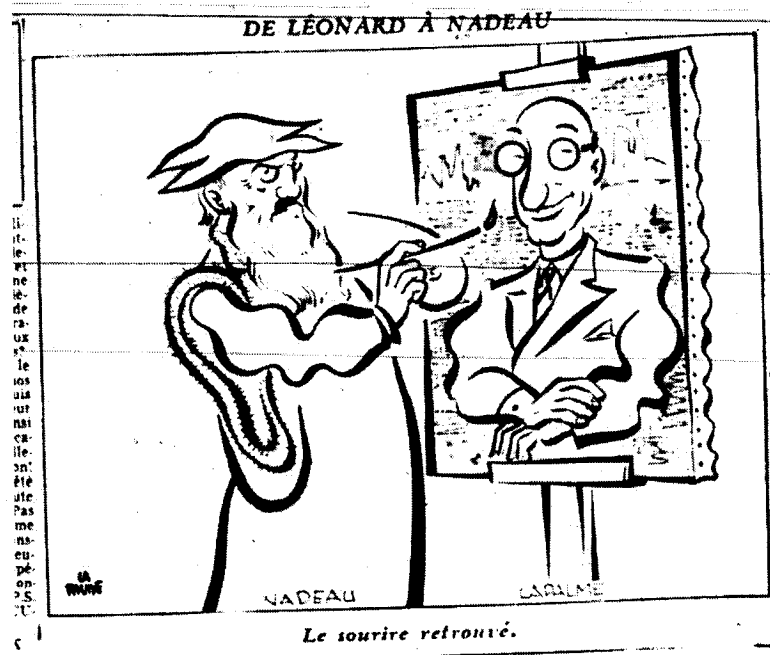


Figure 5-30  
De Léonard à Nadeau. *Le Devoir*, April 19th 1952 : 4



Figure 5-31  
Saint George et le Dragon. *Le Devoir*, May 17th 1952 : 4



Figure 5-32  
Et dire ce que peut être! *Le Devoir*, June 7th 1952 : 4

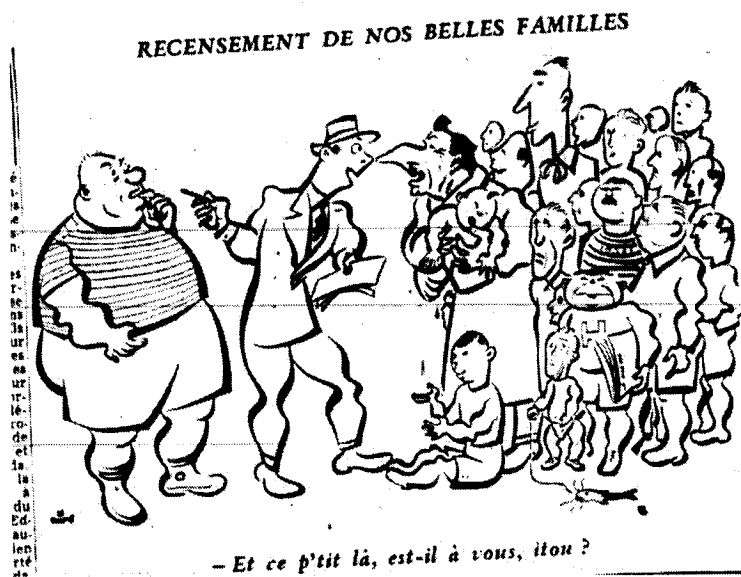


Figure 5-33  
Recensement de nos belles familles. *Le Devoir*, June 13th 1951

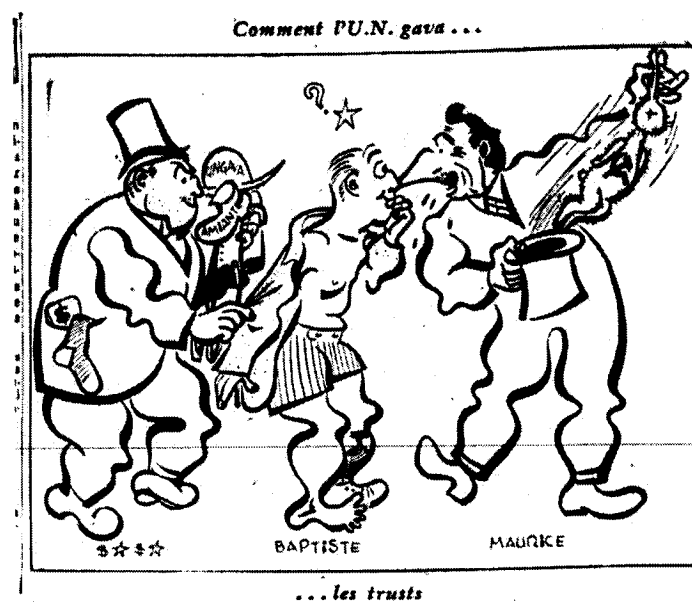
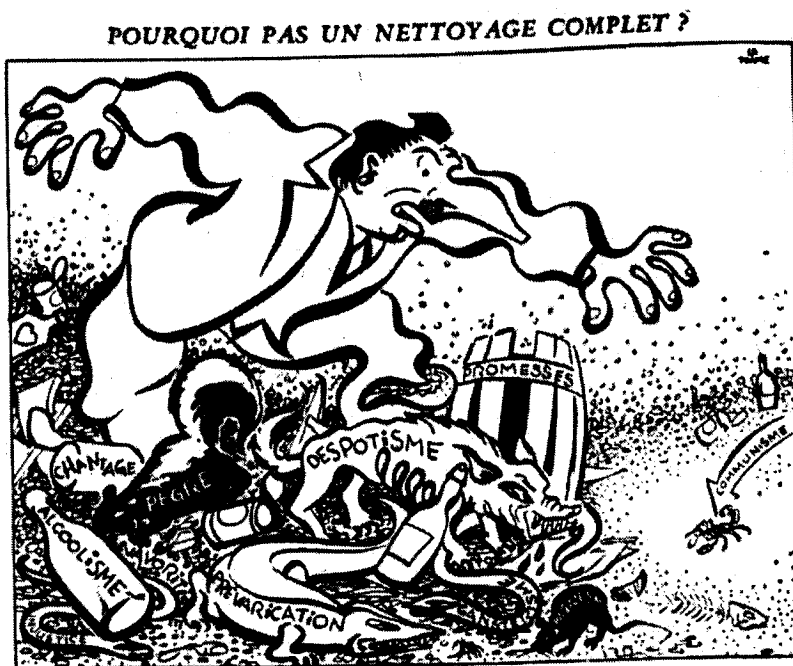


Figure 5-34  
Comment L'UN gava... *Le Devoir*, August 14th 1951: 4



— "Faut débarrasser Québec de cette saleté".

Figure 5-35

Pourquoi pas un nettoyage complet? *Le Devoir*, August 22nd 1951 : 4



... à 3 hrs, M. Duplessis a béni le fil.

Figure 5-36

Ce matin, le 21... *Le Devoir*, September 21st 1951 : 4

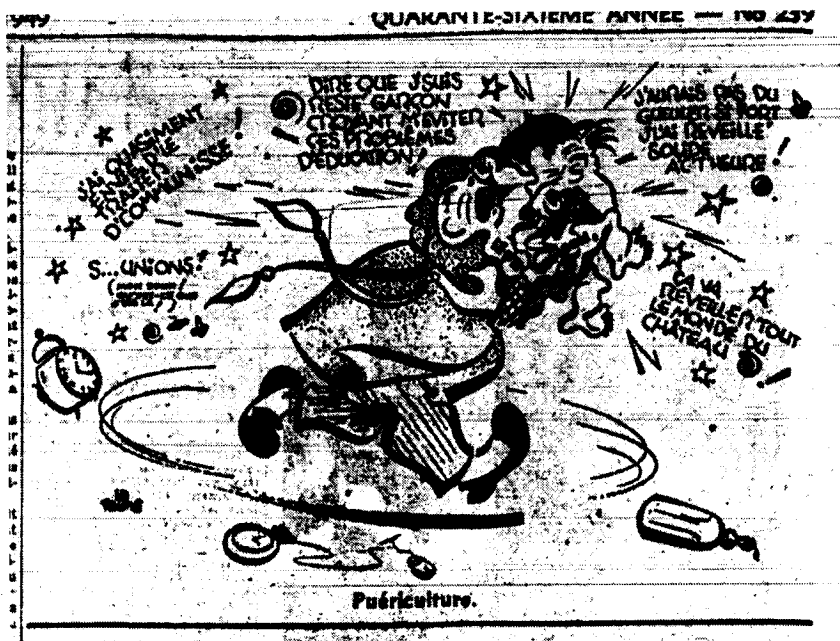


Figure 5-37  
Puériculture. *Le Canada*, January 20th 1949: 4

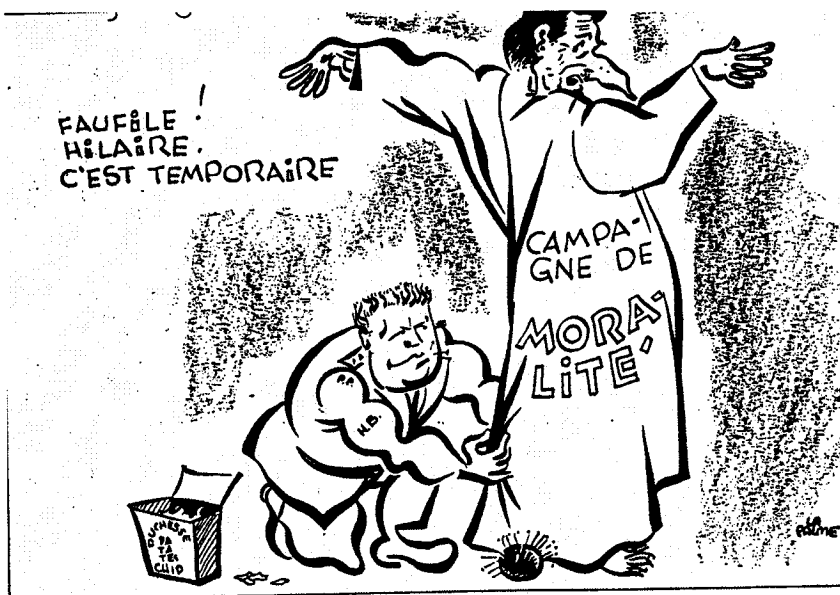


Figure 5-38  
Faufile! Hilaire, c'est temporaire. *Le Devoir*, January 16th 1956 : 4

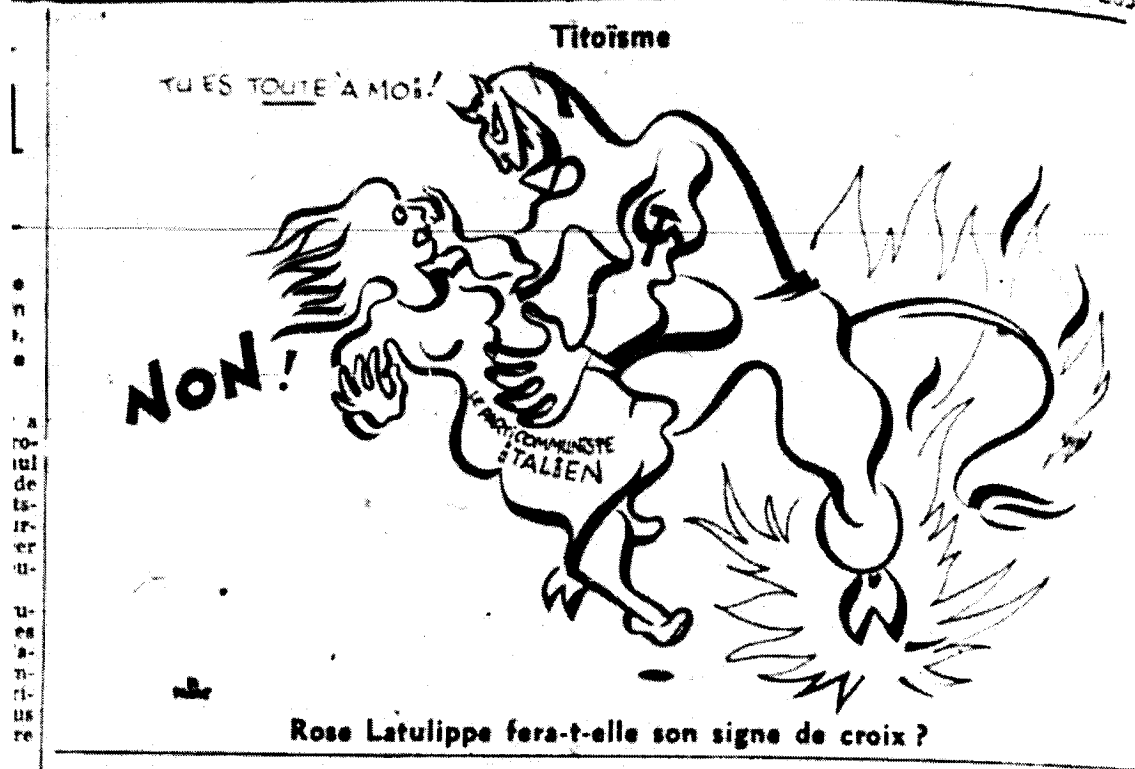


Figure 5-39

Titoïsme. *Le Canada*, February 20th 1951 : 4

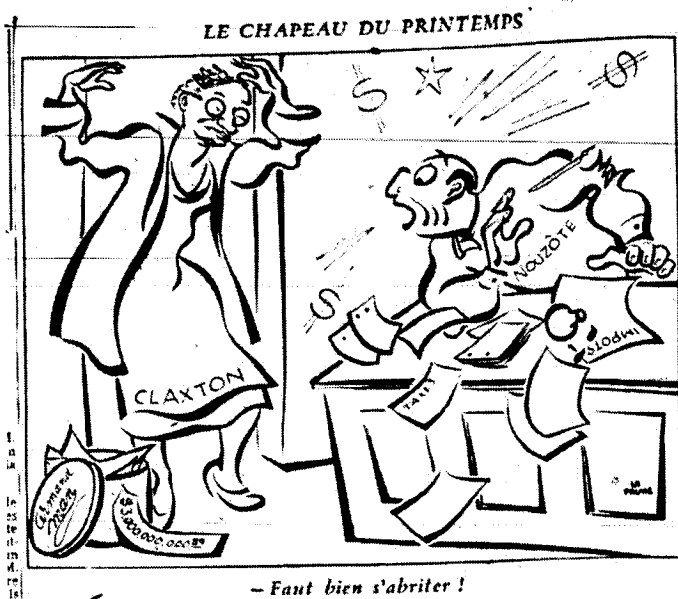


Figure 5-40  
Le chapeau du printemps. *Le Devoir*, April 21st 1952 : 4



Figure 5-41  
Les moments difficiles. *Le Canada*, February 16th 1951 : 4



Figure 5-42  
 Prestance militaire. *Le Devoir*, August 10th 1951 : 4



Figure 5-43  
 'Le Canada devrait prendre des mesures...' *Le Devoir*, December 6th 1955 : 4.







Figure 5-46  
Suggestion d'un monument de glace pour le carnaval. *Le Canada*, January 13th 1949: 4.

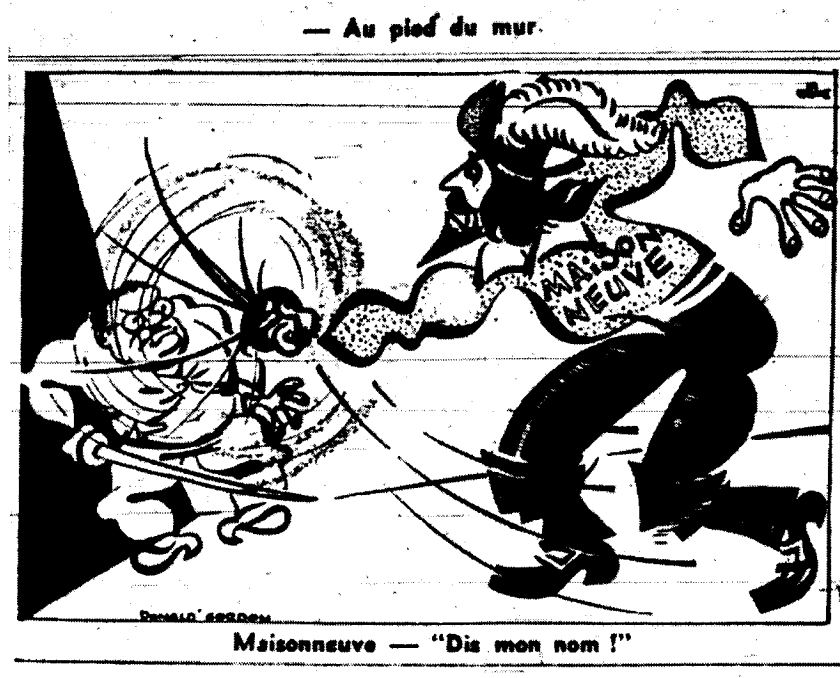


Figure 5-47  
Au pied du mur. *Le Devoir*, December 16th 1955 : 4

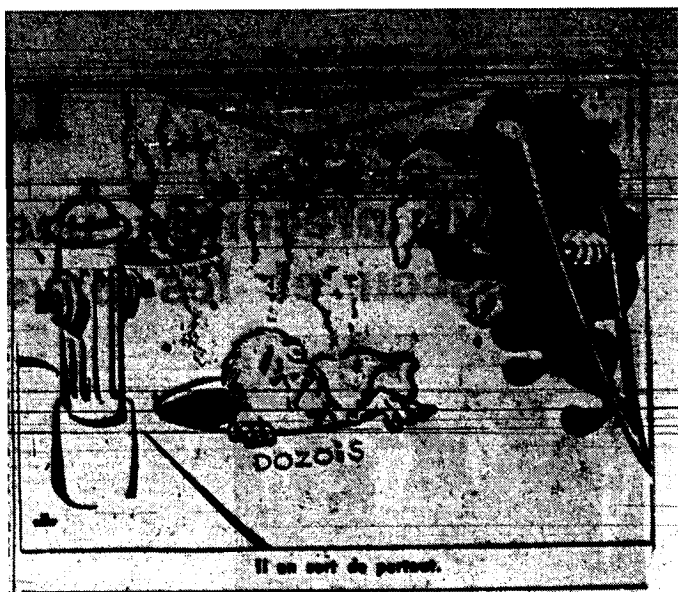


Figure 5-48  
Un aut' candidat. *Le Devoir*, May 11th 1956 : 4

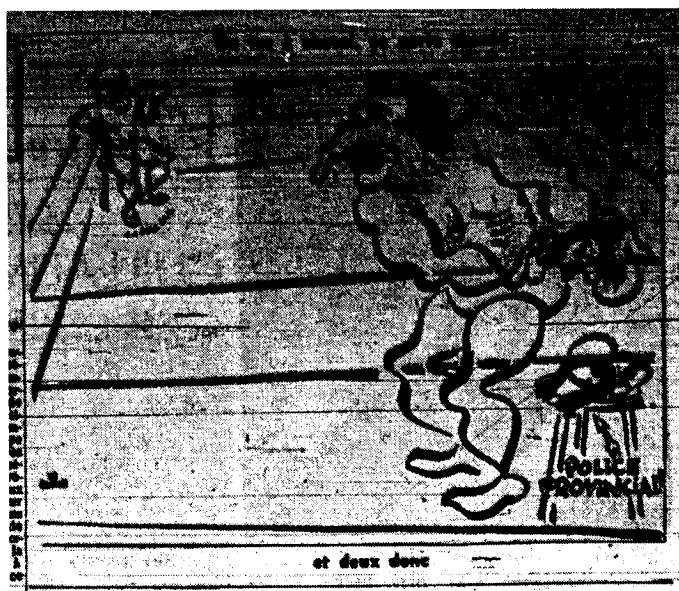


Figure 5-49  
Un fer à cheval, ça porte chance. *Le Devoir*, May 26th 1956 : 4.



Figure 5-50  
Absalom aussi les avait trop longs. *Le Devoir*, May 29th 1956 : 4



Figure 5-51  
Poubelles et crottins. *Le Devoir*, October 22nd 1956 : 4



Figure 5-52  
L'anesthésiste. *Le Devoir*, October 31st 1956 : 4

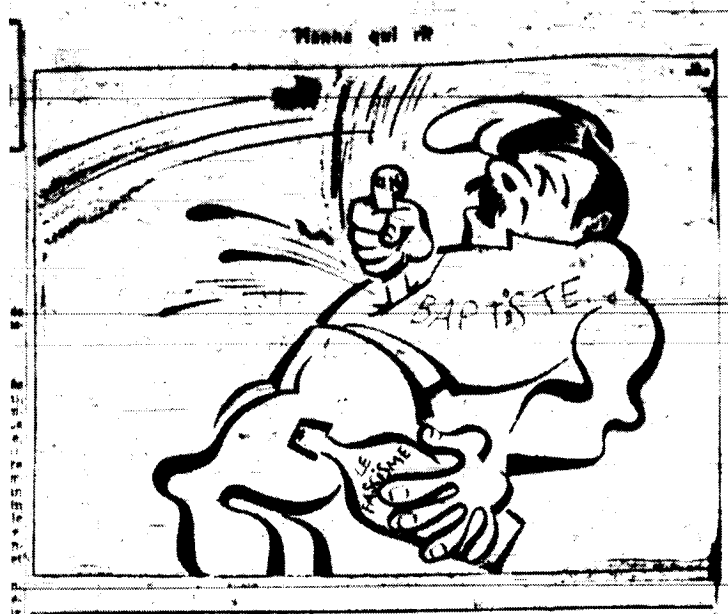


Figure 5-53  
Hanna qui rit. *Le Devoir*, June 21st 1956 : 4



Figure 5-54  
3+7+14+21. *Le Devoir*, May 3rd 1956 : 4.

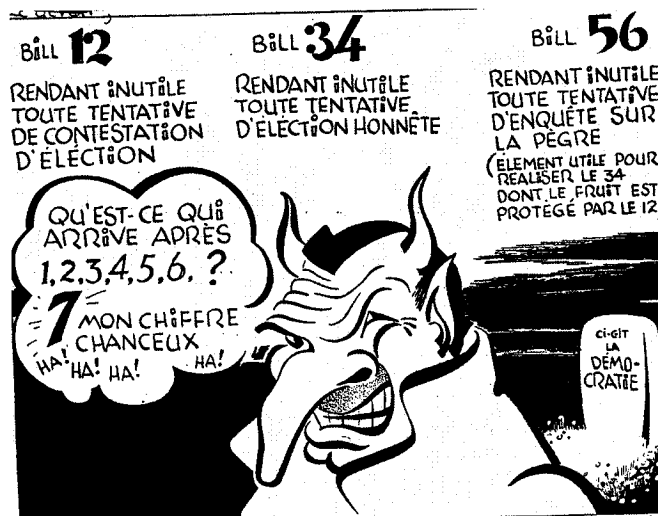


Figure 5-55  
[12+34+56]. *Le Devoir*, 1952.



Figure 5-56  
Chiffre chanceux. *Le Devoir*, June 19th 1952 : 4.



Figure 5-57  
Après les 'élections'. *Le Devoir*, August 27th 1956 : 4



Figure 5-58  
 Dans le nez. *Le Devoir*, September 19th 1956

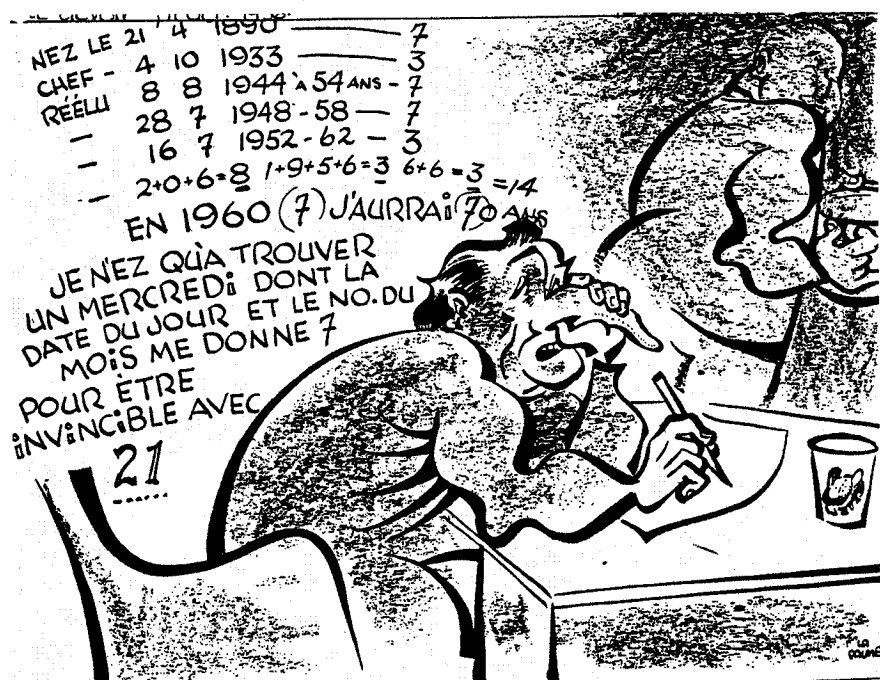


Figure 5-59  
 'Dérangez moi pas, je prépare les prochaines élections.' *Le Devoir*, October 11th 1956





Figure 5-60

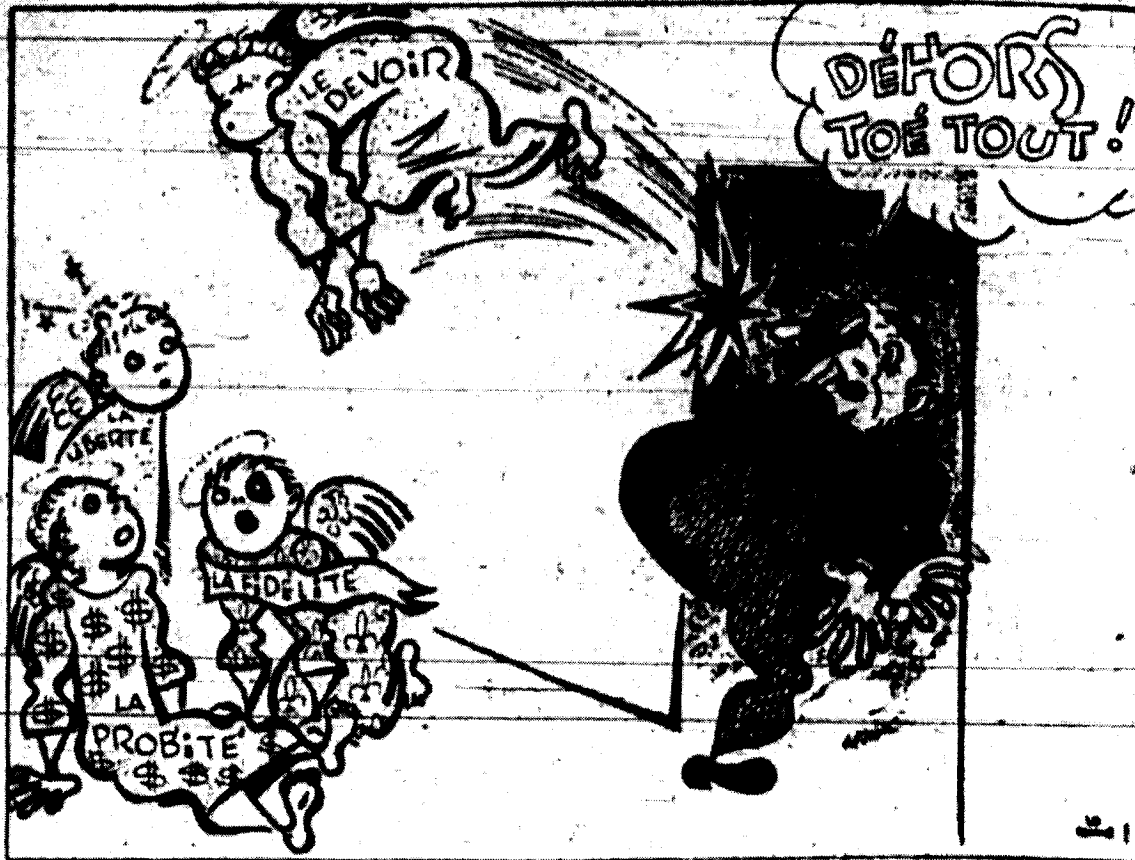
Un qui s'y connaît. 'Et si je suis réélu je consituerai des milleirs d'asiles pour les fous'.  
*Le Devoir*, June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1956: 4



Figure 5-61

Ça parl' au yabl. Avec ce numéro là, les élections, un mercredi, ça manque pas. *Le Devoir*, September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1956: 4

Quand il "nettoie" la place



Mau Mau : "Toé, va rejoindre les aut' vartues"

Figure 5-62

Quand il 'nettoie' la place. *Le Devoir*, July 4th 1958 : 4



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# PAX PLANTE EN GUERRE!

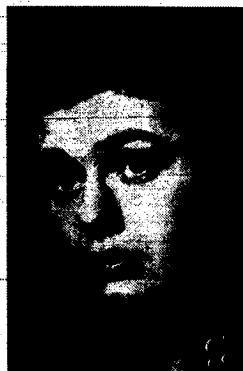
(Lire en page 3)



VOL. I — No 34 — MONTREAL — 12 MARS 1955  
10¢  
HEBDOMADAIRE INDÉPENDANT  
Directeur: Jacques HEBERT

GUY GODIN

Le sympathique François de "Chambre à louer", pièce canadienne de Marcel Dubé qui présente la jeune Scène au Gai. C'est une pièce à voir: elle permet de croire qu'un théâtre canadien est encore possible. On se souvient que Guy Godin était également en vedette dans "Zone", la première pièce de Marcel Dubé, lauréat du grand Festival d'Art Dramatique.



## 1 enfant sur 25 est un "ILLEGITIME"

### PETITS SCANDALES DU REGIME ASSELIN

Si la nouvelle administration a eu certaines difficultés, c'est parce que l'administration Asselin a failli les finances de Montréal dans un pitoyable état. Lire en page 2.

### CONCOURS DE BLA BLA BLA SUR NOS ONDES

De plus en plus, nos postes de radio nous servent des émissions schématisées que l'on abandonne à un quelconque animateur. Des disques truqués, des commentaires faits et bossués de bla bla bla. Il faut que ces impertinances soient bannies de nos ondes. Lire en page 2.

### Révolte contre le Barreau

Les étudiants en Droit de l'Université de Montréal se préparent à se révolter contre le Barreau. Nous publions un article d'un de nos étudiants qui nous expose la situation.



M'AME JULIETTE BELIVEAU

### Mépris des Canadiens-français à l'égard des immigrants chinois

Un reportage de Roland LORRAIN en page 4

Figure 5-65

"M'ame Juliette Beliveau" [Portrait-caricature of Québec comedienne and actress Juliette Béliveau]. *Vrai*, March 12<sup>th</sup> 1955: p. 1.



Figure 5-66

"Le Comité des Bills Très Privés/ ... On pouvait distinguer à l'arrière-plan M. le premier ministre..." *Vrai*, February 15<sup>th</sup> 1958: 12.

# Vrai

VOL. 4 — No 28 MONTREAL 22 FEVRIER 1958  
HEBDOMADAIRE D'ACTION DEMOCRATIQUE  
10c Directeur: Jacques HEBERT

## LA DEMOCRATIE VIOLEE A QUEBEC

Turpitude des conseillers législatifs gouvernementaux. — "Il y a des choses qui se font et d'autres qui ne se font pas !" dit l'hon. P. Blais.

Un véritable hold-up politique s'est produit au Conseil Législatif lors de la présentation du Bill de Montréal. On se souvient des petites calettes qui avaient entouré la discussion de ce bill au Comité des Bills privés et à l'Assemblée Législative : mais ces abus étaient de véritables actes de vertu à côté de toutes les turpitudes qu'ont accumulées certains conseillers législatifs, en particulier, Gérard Martineau, Frank Connors, Olier Renaud et Ed. Asselin, frère du pensionné de Montréal.

Selon la constitution, les membres de la Chambre Haute y sont nommés en reconnaissance de nobles services rendus à leurs concitoyens et en raison de leur dignité : il semble que M. Duplessis ait choisi comme conseillers certains individus en raison du fait qu'ils pouvaient lui ressembler et même le dépasser dans la vilénie.

En effet, les amis de M. Duplessis ont été choisis comme de véritables gajats, de la façon la plus dictatoriale possible, foulant aux pieds tous les principes de la démocratie et empêchant par tous les moyens possibles leurs adversaires de parler, malgré les énergiques interventions des conseillers libéraux Philippe Brûlé et Hector Laferté.

M. DesMarais

On en était à l'étude de l'amendement à la charte de Montréal qui prévoit la nomination d'un 176<sup>e</sup> membre de la commission métropolitaine et le déplacement dictatorial de M. Pierre DesMarais comme président de cette commission.

M. DesMarais fut le premier à prendre la parole :

"A titre de président de la Commission Métropolitaine, je tiens à attirer l'attention du conseil législatif sur l'amendement qui a fait l'effet d'un coup de tonnerre dans un ciel BLEU. Cet amendement n'a pas été précédé d'un avis, comme il aurait dû l'être, si l'on a été question ni à la Commission Métropolitaine, ni au Conseil Municipal, ni au Comité exécutif dont je fais partie. Il n'y a eu de demande à cet effet en aucun endroit ni par aucun terme public."

"De plus, poursuivit M. DesMarais, on amende la charte de la Commission Métropolitaine de Montréal en amendant la charte de Montréal. C'est une procédure qui me semble irrégulière. "A mon avis, cet amendement n'a pour objet que de faire des

changements de personnes."

A ce moment, les conseillers législatifs gouvernementaux, en particulier Olier Renaud, Gérard Martineau, Edouard Masson et Frank Connors refusèrent d'entendre M. DesMarais sans même lui qu'ils étaient suffisamment renseignés.

"Qu'est-ce que vous proposez ?

Intervient M. Brûlé, le vous l'entendez, il a bien le droit de libérer son opinion.

"Disons tout de suite les conclusions auxquelles vous ven-

tes en venir, continue le conseiller Edouard Masson. Ce n'est pas à comprendre votre esprit.

"J'ai l'intention d'en arriver à la conclusion que cet article ne devrait pas être lu."

M. MARTINEAU : "On va vous donner tout le temps dont vous aurez besoin pour vous exprimer, ici, on a hâte de la démocratie."

M. Martineau prononce cette dernière phrase sans rien li-

M. LAPOSTOLLE : "L'émotion dans le débat."

(Suite à la page 2)

## LA GUERRE AUX ORDURES

(lire en pages 8 et 9)

## CHRONIQUE JUDICIAIRE

sans commentaires

(lire en page 5)

## LA GRATUITÉ SCOLAIRE, Etc.

(lire en page 2)

## DES JEUNES GENS MASQUÉS "RAIDENT" LES ÉTALAGES DE JOURNAUX ORDURIERS

Leurs bons desseins ne sauraient faire admettre leur méthode quelque peu brutale. — Ils laissent cependant sur place une lettre d'excuses et d'explication.

Un groupe de jeunes gens de Québec ont trouvé un moyen pour le moins original de faire la guerre à la littérature obscène. Il s'agit d'une méthode plutôt violente et que, pour le bien de l'ordre public, nous ne pouvons recommander, mais dont personne ne peut nier l'efficacité !

Au nombre de cinq ou six, les adolescents ont entrepris d'exter-

miner eux-mêmes la censure des journaux et revues dans quelques établissements commerciaux de la partie haute de Québec. Le visage couvert de masques, les jeunes gens ont fait des raids éclairés sur les étalages de journaux, déchirant sur place toute la littérature qui les offusquait.

(Suite à la page 3)



Un valentin au grand Maurice

Figure 5-67

[Front page of *Vrai*, February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1958, with caricature of Maurice Duplessis by Robert LaPalme.]



**Un valentin au grand Maurice**

Figure 5-68

"Un valentin au Grand Maurice." *Vrai*, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1958: p. 1.



Le Bill de Montréal
VRAL 22 FEVRIER 1958 7

## Le conseiller Saulnier défend la démocratie au Conseil Législatif

Il n'y a pas à s'étonner qu'il n'ait pas été compris des Géraud Martineau, Olier Renaud et autres profiteurs de la dictature du plessiste.

Le conseiller Lucien Saulnier a été nommé un brillant défenseur de la démocratie — de ce qui peut en rester dans cette province — devant les vœux de M. Duplessis qui sont la plupart des conseillers législatifs.

### Pour la forme

On sait que, pour la forme, les lettres de cachet de M. Duplessis avaient été nommées au Conseil législatif avant de devenir loi. Sachant bien, au départ, qu'ils n'avaient rien à gagner et que les conseillers législatifs de M. Duplessis défendaient toujours ardemment les pires injustices de leur maître, plusieurs conseillers municipaux de la Ligue d'Action civique se sont quand même rendus à Québec. Ils ont eu même au honneur de défendre avec force les droits de Montréal et les principes démocratiques, au sein de la classe C, qui était décidée d'arrêter la sanctionner l'inique Bill de Montréal.

### La classe C

Le conseiller Lucien Saulnier a fait un exposé particulièrement intéressant, qui aurait dû faire passer de honte les conseillers législatifs... qui étaient décidés d'arrêter la sanctionner l'inique Bill de Montréal.

### M. Saulnier souligne que la nouvelle procédure rendait entre les mains des conseillers de la classe C, non élus par la population, le sort de Montréal.

«On comprendra, poursuit M. Saulnier, l'insistance du législateur lorsqu'il inclut dans la charta la procédure actuelle des votes sans discussion ou à la majorité absolue. Il voulait s'assurer qu'il y aurait au moins la moitié des conseillers élus qui pourraient se prononcer sur une question en son nom.»

Le conseiller Saulnier rappelle que le vote même du conseil municipal sur ce projet d'amendement, «il y a eu de 40 contre 20, démontre que plus de conseillers élus ont voté contre, qu'en faveur. Ils ont voté pour le changement de procédure.»

«Ce fait là, dit M. Saulnier, a été adopté par une majorité de conseillers élus.»

«Modifier la procédure actuelle des votes aurait créé un précédent dangereux.»

L'hon. Géraud Martineau interrompant le conseiller Saulnier :

«Il leur vote n'est pas nécessaire.»

«Je crois que tous les contributeurs sont d'accord là-dessus», dit réplique M. Saulnier.

Aujourd'hui, avec l'amendement que l'on présente, on consacre au principe tout à fait contraire à la base même de notre régime. «No taxation without representation». Avec cet amendement, on permettrait tout simplement aux conseillers élus d'adopter des mesures administratives et de disposer des deniers publics.

### Un danger évident

L'hon. M. Martineau : — Mettez-vous la bonne foi des conseillers de la classe C en doute ? Je peux difficilement d'accord avec le conseiller Leroux, mais je respecte totalement sa bonne foi et j'ai confiance en lui.

M. Saulnier : — J'ai plusieurs fois confiance dans des conseillers de la classe C. Je suis persuadé qu'ils sont tous de bonne foi, mais il reste quand même qu'un tiers des membres du conseil municipal ne sont pas élus et que, par conséquent, tel que proposé, pourrait permettre à ces 25 conseillers non élus de diriger les affaires de Montréal.

M. Saulnier est plus gêné que nous l'aurions dit nous-même à l'égard des conseillers de la classe C. En prenant pour acquis qu'ils étaient tous de bonne foi, M. Saulnier voulait sans doute donner le débat au dessus des personnes et s'en tenir aux questions de principes.

Il n'y a donc pas à s'étonner qu'il n'ait pas réussi à se faire comprendre par les duplessistes de la Chambre haute... qui n'en ont plus depuis longtemps.

### Mes conseillers municipaux Cette semaine:

Chiropraticien-Psychologue

(District 6, classe A)

Chaque semaine, VRAL publie une courte biographie d'un conseiller municipal. En démocratie, il est essentiel que les citoyens connaissent, le mieux possible, les hommes qui s'occupent activement de la chose publique.

E de d'une famille de 16 enfants, Jean LaRoche est né le 23 mai 1919. Ses études classiques terminées au Séminaire de Québec, il se lança dans l'enseignement spécialisé à l'école technique de Québec, où il fut tour à tour secrétaire de l'école et directeur des études. Par la suite, il s'inscrivit à l'école de psychologie et de pédagogie où il obtint son baccalauréat en pédagogie et sa maîtrise en orientation professionnelle. A la même époque, il suivit à la Faculté des Sciences Sociales de l'Université Laval, des cours en Études familiales.

A la demande des autorités gouvernementales, il vint à Montréal pour s'occuper, à la Cour Juvenile, des problèmes de la délinquance juvénile.

En 1952, il revint d'Indianapolis, aux États-Unis, avec un doctorat en chiropratie. Il pratique depuis sa profession à Montréal.

Membre des Hommes d'affaires du Nord et de l'Association des directeurs professionnels de Québec, M. LaRoche fait de plus en plus des Chevaliers de Colomb, conseil Crémazie.

Membre de la Ligue d'Action Civique et des Amis du Devoir, M. LaRoche s'occupe aussi activement d'œuvres paroissiales et sociales.

Sa compétence professionnelle, jointe à sa profonde expérience des hommes en fait un homme désigné pour représenter ses concitoyens à l'hôtel de ville.

Le 28 octobre dernier, M. LaRoche a été élu conseiller municipal de la classe A représentant les contribuables du district 6.

### Dr Camille QUINTAL, O.D. OPTOMETRISTE

Examen de la vue — Lunettes et rééducation visuelle

4169, rue Papineau TEL. LA. 5-1835

### Jean GUILLET

NOTAIRE

CONSEILLER "B" DISTRICT 9

Récomendé

## Drôle de semaine

avec BERTHIO

LE TIRE-POIS

ATTENTION! PIARSON MET LA MACHINE ELECTORALE EN BRANLE!

ALORS MAURICE, DONNE-LUI SON OS ET AUSSI SON PLESSIS!

LES SPOUTNIKS, POUSH NOUS ON NGUS PROMET LA VRAIE LUNE...

Figure 5-69  
 Berthio (Roland Berthiaume), "Drôle de semaine" [set of four drawings, the top drawing showing Maurice Duplessis using Jean-Marie Savignac as a pea-shooter]. *Vrai*, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1958: p. 7.

La semaine de l'éducation



— Chu tanné de t'entend' japper'!

Figure 5-70

“La semaine de l'éducation”. *Vrai*, March 8<sup>th</sup> 1958: p. 1.





"La leçon d'anatomie" de Rembrandt.

Figure 5-72

"Les tableaux célèbres/ "La leçon d'anatomie" de Rembrandt". *Vrai*, March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1958: 1.

Tableau célèbre



(Jargailles)

Endymion endormi — par Girodet

(Sarto)

Figure 5-73

"Tableau célèbre/ Endymion endormi — par Girodet". *Vrai*, March 29<sup>th</sup> 1958: p. 1.



Figure 5-74

"Le souffleur/"Ca marche au gaz naturel à la législature". *Le Devoir*, December 19<sup>th</sup> 1958: p. 4.



Figure 5-75

"Rébus/Solution: île tente d'oeufs fer terre part dé acte sion en lit belle." *Le Devoir*, December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1958: p. 4.



NORMAND HUDON... Le plus long caricaturiste par le plus grand...

Figure 5-76

"Normand Hudon.... Le plus long caricaturiste par le plus grand....". *Vrai*, May 28 1955: p. 1.



Figure 5-77

Normand Hudon, "Il ne peut plus prendre toutes les LICENCES qu'il prenait". *Le Devoir*, February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1959: 4

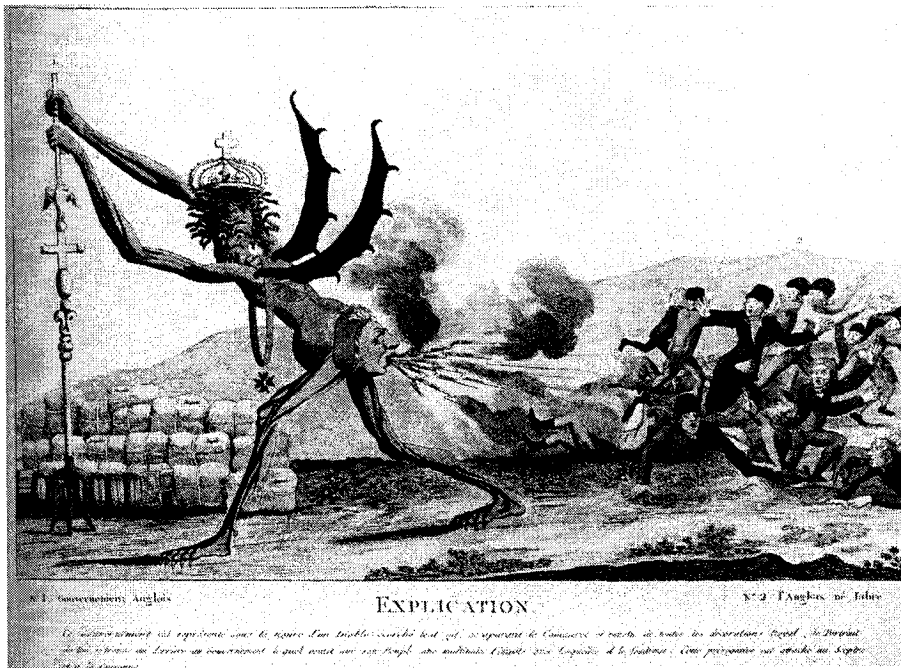


Figure 5-78

The English Government – English Born Free. Coloured etching and line engraving [by Dominique-Vivant Denon], after Jacques-Louis David, 1794. 24.2 x 39 cm Musée Carnavalet, Paris. Reprinted in Claudette Hould, *Images of the French Revolution* (Québec: Musée du Québec/Les publications du Québec, 1989) plate 67: p. 265.



Figure 5-79

“Hommage à Bourgeois”. *La Presse*, February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1959: p. 4.



Figure 5-80  
 “Sur le chemin de la pauvreté”. *Le Devoir*, December 21<sup>st</sup> 1956: 4 (from top to bottom, the first four constituent parts had been printed in *Le Devoir*, December 17-20).





Figure 5-81  
 "Ligue d'action quelque chose". *Le Devoir*, September 5<sup>th</sup> 1958: p. 4.



Figure 5-82  
 Rapt. *Le Devoir*, January 8<sup>th</sup> 1957: p. 4.

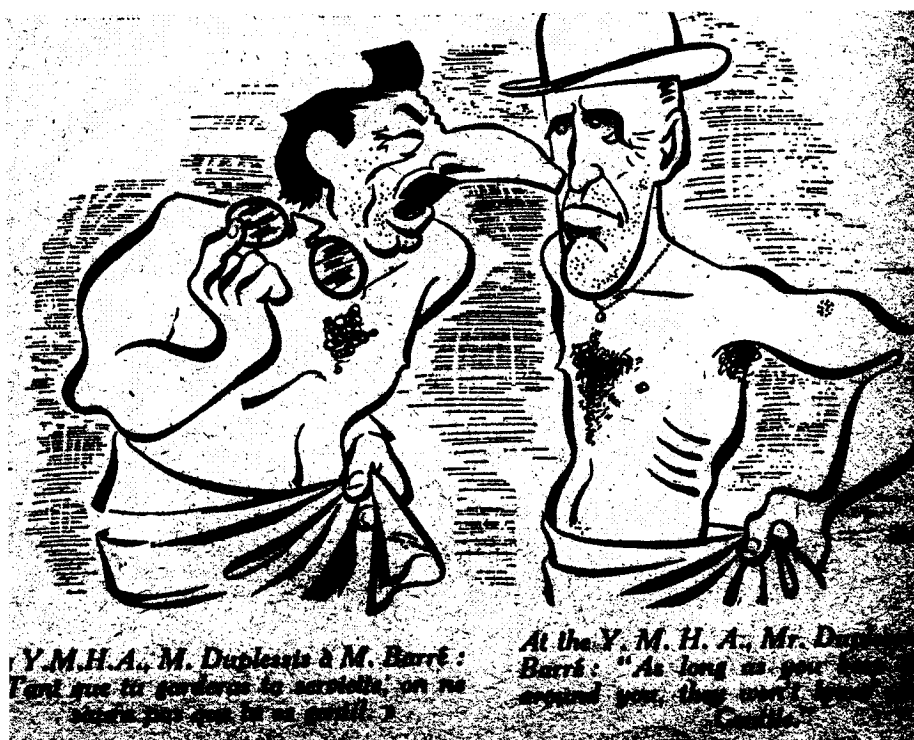


Figure 6-1

Y.M.H.A., M. Duplessis à M. Barré : « Tant que tu garderas la serviette, on ne saura pas que tu es gentil. »

Unpublished caricature printed from 1948, reprinted in LaPalme (1950) : n.p.

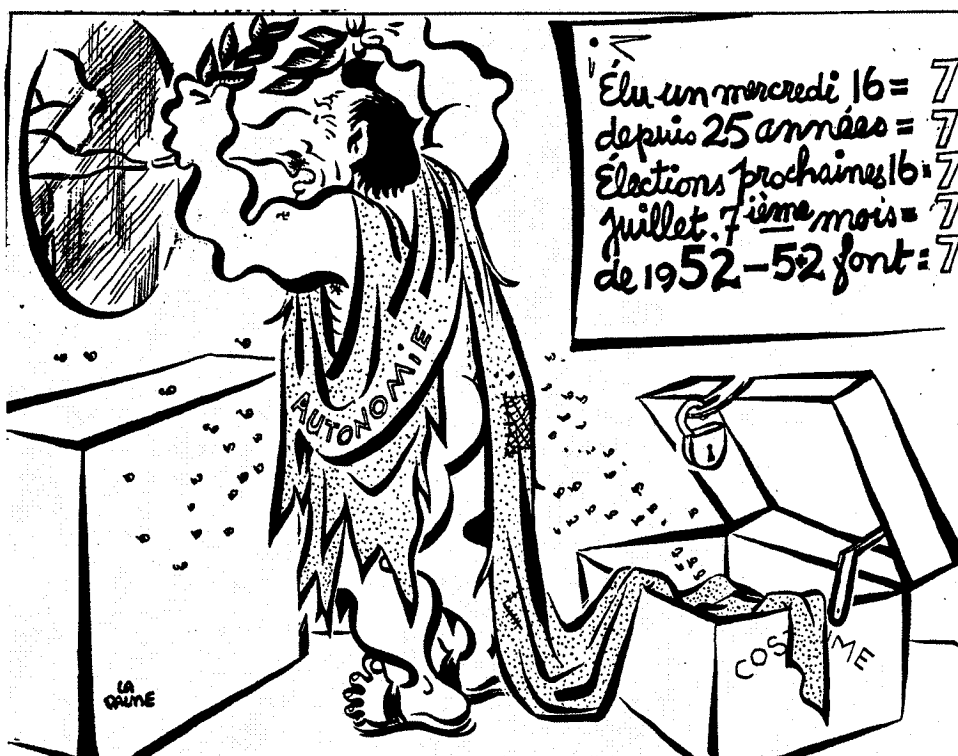


Figure 6-2

La boîte à mythes. *Le Devoir*, April 29th 1952 : 4



**Figure 6-3**  
Henri Julien, Un vieux de « 37 ». (c.1900-1908). Reprinted in *Album Julien* (Montréal, Beauchemin, 1916) : 184.

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